Re: Paik. On time, changeability and identity in the conservation of Nam June Paik’s multimedia installations

Hölling, H.B.

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Hanna B. Hölling
Re: PAIK

ON TIME, CHANGEABILITY AND IDENTITY

IN THE CONSERVATION OF NAM JUNE PAIK’S MULTIMEDIA INSTALLATIONS

Hanna Barbara Hölling
This research was made possible through the Dutch Scientific Organisation (NWO) research grant 2009-2013 and has been realised as a part of the research project *New Strategies in the Conservation of Contemporary Art* at the University of Amsterdam (UvA), Maastricht University (MU) and the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE). The production of this thesis was kindly supported by Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis (ASCA) and NWO.

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ON TIME, CHANGEABILITY AND IDENTITY

IN THE CONSERVATION OF NAM JUNE PAIK’S
MULTIMEDIA INSTALLATIONS

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aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam
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Dr. J.M. Bolten
Dr. P. Laurenson

Faculteit der Geesteswetenschappen
Table of Contents

List of figures ................................................................. 9
Acknowledgements ....................................................... 17

Introduction: Rethinking the Object of Conservation in Multimedia Installations ............................................. 21

I. CONCEPT AND MATERIALITY
Weighing up the Concept and Material in Multimedia Installations ................................................................. 43

Chapter 1. Two Works by Nam June Paik........................................... 47
1.1 Arche Noah
1.2 TV Garden

Chapter 2. On the Threshold of Materialities: Conceptual and Material Aspects of Media Art .......................... 63
2.1 How Conceptual is Paik's Media Art?
2.2 Rewriting Artworks: Scores – Instructions – Certificates
2.3 From Delegated Labour to Extended Collaboration
2.4 Towards Multimedia Installation as Rematerialisation of a Concept

Chapter 3. Musical Roots of Paik's Performed and Performative Media ............................................................ 81
3.1 Fluxus-Stockhausen-Cage: Paik's Musical Connections
3.2 From Performing Arts to Performative Objects
3.3 On Uniqueness and Iterations in Paik's Media Performances
3.4 Crossing Goodman's Distinctions: Duality in Paik's Multimedia
3.5 The Autographic Moment
3.6 Revisiting Authorship: Multimedia and the Concept of Open Work
3.7 Towards Changeability
II. TIME AND CHANGEABILITY
Understanding Time Through Change. .................................................... 107

Chapter 4. Zen for Film ................................................................. 111
4.1 Zen in Three Episodes
4.2 The Event, Object and Process: Zen for Film

Chapter 5. Changeability and Paik's Multimedia .............................. 127
5.1 The Many Forms of Changeability in Paik's Multimedia Installations
5.2 Changeability Related to the Conceptual Level of an Artwork
5.3 From Interactivity to Relics: Changeability and the Participatory Artwork
5.4 Changeability and the Artwork’s Adaptation to Space
5.5 Upgrade of Display and Playback Formats
5.6 Beyond the Limits: The Artwork's Further Development
5.7 Broadening Horizons Through the Acceptance of Change

Chapter 6. Time and Conservation .................................................. 149
6.1 Towards Formulating Questions for a Temporal Critique of Conservation
6.2 Implied Linearity: Freeze Frame, Singular Condition and Reversibility
6.3 The 'Measurable' Paradigms of Time and Space in Conservation.
6.4 Bergsonian Time Versus Time of the Homogenous Magnitudes
6.5 The Captive Moment: Motion as Continuum Versus Instance as a Photogram
6.6 Translating Time, Transforming Objects: What Conservation Could Learn From Bergson

Chapter 7. Heterotemporalities: Inside and Outside of the Medium ....... 171
7.1 Media Temporalities: Film-, Video-, and Paik Time
7.2 Cinematic Time: The Time of the Film
7.3 Television and Video Time
7.4 Conservation as a Temporal Translation and Temporal Forms of Artworks
7.5 Transcending Obsolescence? The Paradox of Ruins
7.6 The Many Times of an Object
7.7 Inside and Outside Time
7.8 Museum Time
7.9 Merging Temporalities: the Conservation Narrative
### Table of Contents

#### III. ARCHIVE AND IDENTITY

**Persistence of Identity Through Change: The Ship of Theseus** .......................... 209

**Chapter 8. The Material and the Immaterial Archive** ............................... 217
8.1 What is an Archive?
8.2 The Museum Archive and its Documentary Dimension
8.3 Archival Dispersion: Inside and Outside the Museum
8.4 The System of Accessibility
8.5 Beyond the Material Repository: Towards the *Virtual* and *Real*
8.6 The Non-Physical Dimension of the Archive: Memory and Tacit Knowledge
8.7 Conservation Narrative in Between Archival Realms

**Chapter 9. Archival Implications** ....................................................... 239
9.1 Archive in Perspective
9.2 Archival Judgements
9.3 From the Virtual to the Actual
9.4 Archival Actualisation: Back to Creative Conservation?
9.5 From the Archive to an Artwork and the Artwork Meaning Archive
9.6 Archival Turn: Temporal Materiality, Endurance and Continuity

**CONCLUSION: The Many Archai of Conservation** ............................... 257

**Bibliography** .................................................................................. 263
- Archives
- Conversations
- Books, articles and conference papers
- Audio and video recordings

**Images** .......................................................................................... 293

**Appendix** ....................................................................................... 331

**Samenvatting (summary in Dutch)** .................................................. 337

**Résumé** .......................................................................................... 343
List of figures

**Figure 0.1** Nam June Paik, *Canopus* (1989)
Collection of the ZKM Karlsruhe
Source: ZKM

**Figure 0.2** Nam June Paik, *Canopus* (1989)
Collection of the ZKM Karlsruhe
Installation view after the damage that occurred on December 8, 2008, EnBW Karlsruhe.
Source: ZKM, archive of the conservation department

**Figure 0.3** Nam June Paik, *Canopus* (1989)
Collection of the ZKM Karlsruhe
Documentation of the damage that occurred on December 8, 2008.
Source: ZKM, archive of the conservation department

**Figure 0.4** Nam June Paik, *Canopus* (1989) during the restoration at the ZKM in 2009: selecting and collecting the bits and pieces of the monitors
Source: ZKM, archive of the conservation department
Photograph: Hanna Hölling

**Figure 0.5** Elements of the monitors of *Canopus* after restoration
Source: ZKM, archive of the conservation department
Photograph: Hanna Hölling

**Figure 1.1** Nam June Paik, *Arche Noah* (1989)
Various manifestations 1989 – 2009

**Figure 1.2** Nam June Paik, *Arche Noah* (1989)
Installation view at Weisses Haus, Hamburg, 1989
Photograph: Helge Mundt

**Figure 1.3** Nam June Paik, *Arche Noah* (1989)
Installation view on the occasion of *Multimedial 2*, Opel Factory, Karlsruhe, 1991
Photograph: Thomas Goldschmidt

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1 All websites were accessed between March and April 2013
List of figures

**Figure 1.4** Nam June Paik, *Arche Noah* (1989).
Collection of the ZKM Karlsruhe
Installation view during the test re-installation at the ZKM in 2008
Photographs: Steffen Harms

**Figure 1.5** Nam June Paik, *Arche Noah* (1989)
Collection of the ZKM Karlsruhe
Photograph: ZKM, archive of the conservation department

**Figure 1.6** Nam June Paik, *Arche Noah* (1989)
Detailed view of the damage that occurred as a consequence of repeatedly having to fix the slats
Photograph: ZKM, archive of the conservation department

**Figure 1.7** Drawing and modification of the inner construction of *Arche Noah* (1989)
Collection of the ZKM Karlsruhe
Drawing: Jochen Saueracker, photograph: Hanna Hölling
Source: ZKM, archive of the conservation department

**Figure 1.8** Nam June Paik, *TV Sea* (1974)

**Figure 1.9** Nam June Paik, *TV Garden* (1974)
Installation view during documenta 6 in Kassel, Germany, in 1977
Photograph: Friedrich Rosenstiel
Source: www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/tv-garden/

**Figure 1.10** Nam June Paik, *TV Garden* (1974)
Photograph: Jürgen Nogal
Source: Kunsthalle Bremen

**Figure 1.11** Nam June Paik, *TV Garden* (1974)
Photograph: Peter Moore
Source: www.variablemedia.net/e/case_paik_tvgar_b.html

**Figure 1.12** Nam June Paik, *TV Garden* (1974)
Installation view at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, on the occasion of *The Worlds of Nam June Paik* February 11 – April 26, 2000
Source: www.variablemedia.net/e/case_paik_tvgar.html
Figure 1.13 Nam June Paik, *TV Garden* (1974)
Collection of the Guggenheim Museum New York
Source: www.db-artmag.de/archiv/2004/d/3/1/203-4.html

Figure 1.14 Nam June Paik, *TV Garden* (1974)
Collection of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf / K21
Installation view with UV lights at the K21 Ständehaus in 2010
Photograph: Werner Müller
Source: K21, archive of the conservation department

Figure 1.15 Nam June Paik, *TV Garden* (1974)
Collection of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf / K21
Installation view at Tate Liverpool on the occasion of the exhibition *Nam June Paik: Video Artist, Performance Artist, Composer and Visionary*, December 17, 2010 – March 13, 2011
Photograph: Hanna Hölling

Figure 1.16 Nam June Paik, *TV Garden* (1974)
Collection of the Nam June Paik Art Center in Seoul
Installation view at the Nam June Paik Art Center in Seoul, October 2012
Photograph: Hanna Hölling

Figure 2.1 Paik’s drawings for *Zen for TV* (1963) and *Brandenburger Tor* (1992)

Figure 2.2 Mark Patsfall, instructions for preparation of *TV Clock* (1991),
Source: Archive of Santa Barbara Museum of Art, California

Figure 2.3 Installation Bible for the travelling exhibition *Electronic Superhighway*
Source: Archive of Carl Solway, Cincinnati

Figure 2.4 Mark Patsfall, *Media Tower* (2010), signed photograph
Source: collection Hanna Hölling

Figure 2.5 Mark Patsfall, mock-up of *Chang Yongsil Robot*, date unknown
Source: Archive of Mark Patsfall, Cincinnati

Figure 2.6 Mark Patsfall, mock-up of *Mercury*, date unknown
Source: Archive of Mark Patsfall, Cincinnati

Figure 2.7 Nam June Paik, *Aunt and Uncle* (from the series *Family of Robots*, 1986). Installation view on the occasion of the exhibition *Nam June Paik: Video Artist, Performance Artist, Composer and Visionary*, Tate Liverpool, December 17, 2010 – March 13, 2011
Source: www.artinliverpool.com/?p=14628

Figure 2.8 A workshop at Paik’s factory in Cincinnati in the 1980s – 90s
Source: Archive of Mark Patsfall, Cincinnati
Photograph: Mark Patsfall
List of figures

Figure 2.9 Working in Paik’s factory in Cincinnati in the 1980s – 90s
Source: Archive of Mark Patsfall, Cincinnati
Photograph: Mark Patsfall

Figure 3.1 Paik signing and painting calligraphy on the installations, date unknown
Source: Archive of Mark Patsfall, Cincinnati
Photograph: Mark Patsfall

Figure 3.2 Paik signing a cabinet and painting calligraphy on TV Garden (1985) in Patsfall’s first studio on Third St. in Cincinnati, date unknown
Source: Archive of Mark Patsfall, Cincinnati
Photograph: Mark Patsfall

Figure 3.3 Nam June Paik, Zen For Head. Fluxus Festspiele neuster Musik, Wiesbaden, September 1 – 23, 1962
Source: www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/zen-for-head/images/1/

Figure 4.1 Nam June Paik, Zen For Film (1962–64)
Collection of the Centre Georges Pompidou Paris
Installation view during the exhibition Bild für Bild – Film und zeitgenössische Kunst, Museum Ostwall, Dortmunder U, Dortmund, Germany, December 12, 2010 – April 25, 2011
Photograph: Hanna Hölling

Figure 4.2 Nam June Paik, Zen For Film (1962–64)
Collection EAI New York
Installation view during the exhibition Nam June Paik: Video Artist, Performance Artist, Composer and Visionary at Tate Liverpool December 17, 2010 – March 13, 2011, and its accompanying description
Photograph: Hanna Hölling

Figure 4.3 Nam June Paik, Zen For Film (1962–64) and a close-up of the film reel
Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York
Source: MoMA and Guggenheim Museum

Figure 4.4 Nam June Paik, Zen For Film (Fluxus edition announced 1964)
Source: Erik Andersch Collection, Nam June Paik Art Center, Seoul.
Photograph: Hanna Hölling

Figure 4.5 Peter Moore, Zen For Film (1964)
Paik casting shadows on the projection of his Zen for Film projected at the New Cinema Festival I, Filmmakers’ Cinematheque, New York, November 2, 1965
Documentary photograph by Peter Moore
Source: www.njpaparticentcenter.kr/en/research/collections

Figure 4.6 John Cage, notation for 4’33”, 1952 (1960)
Source: Sounds Like Silence, Hardware MedienKunstVerein Dortmund, Germany

Figure 4.7 Robert Rauschenberg in front of White Paintings, 1951
Source: www.canonpluscanon.wordpress.com/
List of figures

Figure 4.8 Nam June Paik, *Zen for Film* (1962–64)
Screening on the occasion of the conference *Auteur du Zen for Film* at Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, September 29, 2010
Photograph: Hanna Hölling

Figure 4.9 Man Ray, *Dust Breeding* (1920, printed ca. 1967)
Source: www.metmuseum.org

Figure 5.1 Nam June Paik, *Zen for TV* (1963, replica 1982)
Collection Marcel Oldenbach
Source: www.goo.gl/XIIiY (www.washingtonpost.com)

Figure 5.2 Nam June Paik, *Zen for TV* (1963)
Various instantiations: MoMA/Silverman Fluxus Collection (1975/81); Smithsonian American Art Museum (1976); Hood Museum of Art (1978), Dartmouth College

Figure 5.3 Nam June Paik, *Moon is the Oldest TV* (1965, 2000 version)
Collection of the Nam June Paik Art Center, Seoul
Installation view October 2012
Photograph: Hanna Hölling

Figure 5.4 Nam June Paik, *Moon is the Oldest TV* (1965)
Installation view at the German Pavilion *Marco Polo*, Venice Biennale 1993
Photograph: Dieter Daniels
Source: www.medienkunstnetz.de/werke/deutscher-pavillon/bilder/6/

Figure 5.5 Nam June Paik, *Moon is the Oldest TV* (1965, 2000 version)
Collection of the Nam June Paik Art Center, Seoul
View of the rear of the installation with DVD players
Photograph: Hanna Hölling

Figure 5.6 Nam June Paik, *Magnet TV* (1965)
Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art
Installation view on the occasion of the exhibition *Nam June Paik: Video Artist, Performance Artist, Composer and Visionary*, Tate Liverpool, December 17, 2010 – March 13, 2011
Photograph: Hanna Hölling

Figure 5.7 Nam June Paik, *Random Access Music* during the *Exposition of Music – Electronic Television*, Rolf Jährling Gallery, Wuppertal, Germany, March 12 – 20, 1963
Source: www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/random-access/images/2/

Figure 5.8 Nam June Paik, *Record Schaschlik* (1963)
Installation view during the exhibition *Nam June Paik: Video Artist, Performance Artist, Composer and Visionary*, Tate Liverpool, December 17, 2010 – March 13, 2011
Photograph: Hanna Hölling

Figure 5.9 Nam June Paik, *Random Access* (1963)
Installation view during the exhibition *Nam June Paik: Video Artist, Performance Artist, Composer and Visionary*, Tate Liverpool, December 17, 2010 – March 13, 2011
Photograph: Hanna Hölling
List of figures

Figure 5.10 Jochen Saueracker, exhibition objects: *Record Schaschlik, Magnet TV* and *Random Access* (Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna, 2009)
Installation view on the occasion of the exhibition *The Anarchy of Silence. John Cage and Experimental Art*, Schunck Heerlen, February 9 – May 9, 2010
Photograph: Hanna Hölling

Figure 5.11 Nam June Paik, *TV Clock* (1989)
Source: www.flickr.com/photos/mickeyono2005/3045446126/in/faves-55255799@N06/

Figure 5.12 Nam June Paik, *TV Clock* (1989)
Collection of Santa Barbara Museum of Art
Installation view at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, on the occasion of *The Worlds of Nam June Paik*, February 11 – April 26, 2000
Source: www.pastexhibitions.guggenheim.org/paik/index.html

Figure 5.13 Nam June Paik and Otto Piene, *Untitled* (1968, MoMA New York).
Source: www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=80987

Figure 5.14 Nam June Paik, *TV Buddha* (1974)
Collection of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam
Photograph: Hanna Hölling

Figure 5.15 Nam June Paik, various manifestations of *TV Buddha* (1974)
Screen capture of a random Google search using the keywords: ‘Nam June Paik TV Buddha’
Source: www.goo.gl/EhGVt (www.google.com)

Figure 5.16 Nam June Paik, *Der Denker – TV Rodin* (1978)
Installation view on the occasion of *Transmediale 06: Smile Machines*, Berlin, February 3 – March 19, 2006, Photograph: Jonathan Gröger
Source: www.pastwebsites.transmediale.de/page/whatis/listings/listing.1.press.download.1.html

Figure 6.1 Bergson’s diagram of a cone illustrating the coexistence of the various temporalities in the present

Figure 6.2 Etienne-Jules Marey, *Bird Flight Study* (1886)
Source: www.artspotting.tumblr.com

Figure 6.3 Eadweard Muybridge, *Animal Locomotion* (1887)
Source: www.wildfilmhistory.org

Figure 7.1 Wolf Vostell, *Beton TV Paris* (1974–1981)
Source: www.medienkunstnetz.de/werke/beton-v-paris/

Figure 7.2 Nam June Paik, *Rembrandt Automatic* (1963)
Installation view during the exhibition *Nam June Paik: Video Artist, Performance Artist, Composer and Visionary*, Tate Liverpool, December 17, 2010 – March 13, 2011
Photograph: Hanna Hölling
Figure 7.3 Nam June Paik, *Something Pacific* (1986)
Stuart Collection, University of California, San Diego
Installation view at the University of California, San Diego campus, May 2011
Photograph: Hanna Hölling

Figure 7.4 Nam June Paik, *Something Pacific* (1986)
Stuart Collection, University of California, San Diego
Various elements in the yard at the University of California, San Diego campus, May 2011
Photographs: Hanna Hölling

Figure 7.5 Nam June Paik, *Something Pacific* (1986)
Stuart Collection, University of California, San Diego
The master tape and a video wall at the UCSD Media Center
Photograph: Hanna Hölling

Figure 7.6 Marcel Duchamp, *Network of Stoppages* (1914)
Source: www.moma.org/explore/multimedia/audios/290/745

Figure 7.7 Marcel Duchamp, *Bride Stripped by Her Bachelors, Even* (*The Large Glass*, 1915–23)
Source: www.philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/54149.html

Figure 7.8 Marcel Duchamp, *Three Standard Stoppages* (1913)
Source: www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=78990

Figure 8.0 Ise Shrine inner compound in Ise, Japan
View of the old and new buildings during the reconstruction and transition period
Photo: Jingu Shicho

Figure 8.1 Diagram. Archival dispersion: ZKM’s micro-archives

Figure 8.2 Diagram. Archival dispersion beyond the institution

Figure 9.1 Nam June Paik, *Untitled* (*Piano*, 1993) and a close-up of Paik’s signature on the keys
MoMA Painting and Sculpture Collection
MoMA, April 17, 2013
Source: MoMA, Imaging Service Department and Hanna Hölling

Figure 9.2 Nam June Paik, *Piano Piece* (1993)
Collection Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York
Source: www.albrightknox.org/collection/collection-highlights/piece:paik-piano-piece/

Figure 9.3 Nam June Paik, *Untitled* (*Piano Piece*, 1993)
Source: Holly Solomon Gallery
List of figures

**Figure 9.4** Nam June Paik, *Untitled (Piano Piece, 1993)*
Installation view at the Holly Solomon Gallery, New York, ca. 1993
Source: www.museum.tv/eotvsection.php?entrycode=paiknamjun

**Figure 9.5** Nam June Paik, *Video Piano* (1999)
Collection of Guy Pieters Gallery, Knokke Belgium

**Figure 9.6** Nam June Paik, *Hommage aan Stanley Brouwn* (1984)
Collection Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam
Installation view at the Stedelijk Museum, small room, date unknown
Source: www.stedelijk.nl/kunstwerk/11903-hommage-aan-stanley-brouwn

**Figure 9.7** Nam June Paik, *Hommage aan Stanley Brouwn* (1984)
Collection Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam
Installation view on the occasion of the exhibition *TV as...*, Temporary Stedelijk, August 28, 2010 – May 15, 2011
Source: www.stedelijk.nu/en/now-at-the-stedelijk/archive/archive-exhibitions/tv-as
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Born in 1975, I missed the most significant decade of the heyday of Fluxus and new artistic forms of expression of the 1960s and 70s. With a strong desire to make art myself, and, later, to become a conservator, I undertook an academic pilgrimage through art academies and universities in Warsaw, Rome, Cologne and Amsterdam. I first encountered Nam June Paik’s work while wandering through the Lehmbruck Museum in Duisburg, Germany, sometime in the 1990s, not yet knowing where the journey would take me. It was TV Buddha at which I stared a moment too long. It was much later that I became a ‘Paikian,’ working at the ZKM in Karlsruhe with its stunning collection of media art. I remember the day Nam June died. Reading a daily newspaper on the screen of my computer, I believed that an era had come to an end.

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For a couple of years now, I have been pursuing a desire to conduct research and to lecture, towards which this thesis contributes. For making this possible and having trust in my knowledge and abilities as a lecturer, I would like to thank the Academy for Art and Design in Stuttgart, the Royal Danish Academy of Art in Copenhagen, the University of Glasgow, the Reinwardt Academy in Amsterdam, and, last but not least, my ‘home’ university – the University of Amsterdam.
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Hanna B. Hölling
Amsterdam, April 2013
INTRODUCTION
Rethinking the *Object of Conservation* in Multimedia Installations

On a cold winter’s day in southern Germany in early December 2008, upon my arrival at the ZKM Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe where I held the position of conservator, I received a message that contained devastating information concerning the external exhibition space where a large part of the ZKM Nam June Paik’s holdings had been on display since 23 October of the same year. That very morning at 5:10 AM, the night guard of the premises heard an unbelievably loud bang. It was the implosion of six monitors of *Canopus* (1989), one of Paik’s video installations from the collection that dropped to the ground from the wall on which it was installed and was severely damaged. We were all shocked. Through this unfortunate set of events, *Canopus* would contribute to one of the most exciting discussions that I have witnessed in an institutional context relate to the ontology of a *conservation object* and would, simultaneously, confirm my decision to devote myself to thinking about the conservation of media works on a theoretical as well as a practical level.

*Canopus* was created in the late 1980s as one of a series of planets and stars, representing, among others, Mercury, the Earth and the Sun, assembled in Paik’s workshop run by Carl Solway in Cincinnati, Ohio, and acquired by Heinrich Klotz for the emerging media art collection of the ZKM in the early 1990s (Fig. 0.1). *Canopus* consists of six small format (8”) Sony monitors that play a one-channel video and symmetrically surround a chromed *Oldsmobile* hubcap from the 1970s, inscribed with Korean calligraphy and Paik’s signature at the bottom. The investigation of the event produced no clear result. *Canopus* was found shattered on the floor (Fig. 0.2). The technical examination that my colleagues from the conservation department and I carried out revealed that virtually all the elements of the installation were damaged: every one of the vacuum tubes of the six cathode ray tube (CRT) monitors had imploded, their plastic casing scattered and the chromed hubcap revealing a severe deformation (Fig. 0.3). Despite the video data stored on a digital carrier (Compact Flash Media Player) and the supporting structure, which remained quite stable, *Canopus* presented a disastrous picture. A discussion on possible ways to recover the installation was quickly initiated. As I will explain, the case of *Canopus* demonstrated very well the ambivalence

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involved in approaching the dual nature of media artworks – as physical artefacts carrying the artist’s trace and as performances – as well as ambiguities in the decision-making process.

In-depth discussions and copious consultations with representatives from various departments of the museum centred around the future of *Canopus* and questioned whether the installation should be restored and, if so, to what extent. These debates led to the decision to recover the work. The investigation into the second-hand market of audiovisual equipment in the United States resulted in the possibility of purchasing used, intact tubes and electronic boards to recover the technical functionality of the monitors. Because the new casings diverged in design, the conservation department investigated the feasibility of restoring the damaged casings; indeed, one of the two assistant conservators specialised in plastics. The museum curatorial staff and my departmental colleagues approved the subsequent procedures of restoration as appropriate in the struggle to obliterate any traces of material damage (Figs. 0.4 and 0.5). Yet my investigation into the possibility of the reconstruction of the visual appearance of the hubcap resulted in resistance and confusion among them. To be more precise, the reconstruction of the hubcap aroused strong disapproval among the conservators. My consultation with a specialist in the conservation of metal artefacts determined that the deformations of the hubcap were not ‘restorable’ – the chrome coating would flake off with even the slightest attempt to smooth out the dents in the surface. Departing from my conviction that the damage to the hubcap diminished the visual appreciation of the installation as a whole (the dents deformed the chrome surface rather decisively) and that this series of Paik’s installations did not thematise decay or damage, I proposed a replacement of the hubcap using a second-hand element of exactly the same parameters and appearance, which I was able to acquire after time-consuming research on the American spare-parts market via the online auction website eBay. Although as a traditionally trained conservator with skills in copying I was convinced of the technical feasibility, I left open whether and to what degree it would be possible to reproduce the calligraphy and Paik’s signature. My proposition was to retain the original hubcap at the museum store and display the installation with replaced monitors and a reconstructed hubcap in the form initially intended by Paik, explaining to the viewer the history of the installation and the decision made, together with technical information about the reproduced elements. My conviction about the accuracy of such a solution lay in the possibility of using the original element – the hubcap – if necessary, while the installation would still address the viewer as it did initially – as a radiant *Canopus* with twinkiling electronic images – the brightest star in the southern constellation of Carina and Argo Navis, and the second brightest star in the night-time sky after Sirius – rather than a ruined installation presenting its history, marked with traces and events of its unfortunate past.

My proposition was never realised, and, by the time I left the museum one year later, it was hotly debated as too much of a far-reaching reconstruction presuming, should it be
realised, an attempt at ‘fraud’ in reproducing the original signature and calligraphy by Paik. In view of the dual nature of such installations – hybrid artworks involving both autographic and allographic elements addressed extensively in this thesis – it becomes clear why my proposal was so wildly debated and, eventually, rejected. Here, the conventional understanding of the ‘authenticity’ of artworks is associated with nominal authenticity that relates to the origins of the artwork; once an object is ‘signed’ and carries a trace of the artist, it is untouchable as an ‘original’ piece, an evidence of his/her activity. Canopus, similarly to Arche Noah (1989) and other artworks addressed in this thesis, unites in its structure both the elements that are responsible for the performance of the video image – the monitors, and the central element – and the inscribed hubcap, which represents the more traditional piece, a signed sculpture, as it were. The latter functions in the standard conservation approach within the nominal terms of authenticity, while the former is accepted as being variable and therefore more easily exchangeable. The challenge of Canopus therefore lies both in recognising its values and their correct proportions and understanding the function of the installation as an entity in order to sustain its appearance for future audiences.

The story of Canopus has taught me that when thinking about artworks, we – as conservation and museum professionals – are, on the one hand, operating within the conceptual framework designed for traditional artefacts oriented towards safeguarding the physical material, while on the other, we allow change to take place at the technical level of the installation. If controlled change is permitted when it comes to playback and display equipment, why have such restrictions in relation to other components of artworks? And, if we allow for change to take place, how much of it is permitted while continuing to identify an artwork as still the same, ‘authentic,’ object, the one ‘from before,’ without having to say: this is a different piece. In other words, how much modification can an artwork tolerate while retaining its own identity or authenticity? What if an artwork invites change? And what does change tell us about the identity of the artwork? Can change be understood in relation to time, linking the identity of an artwork directly to how we understand time in artworks and in conservation? How does what we know and what we construct about artworks relate to the archive? Can an artwork be conceptualised in relation to a dynamic, evolving and expanding archive?

**Rationale and Research Question**

Since the emergence of new artistic forms in the 1960s and 70s, the conservation of contemporary art and multimedia installations has become increasingly engaged with
changeable artworks.\(^3\) The story of *Canopus* confronts us with a particular set of questions due to the major changes that took place as the result of an incident, yet, at the same time, it introduces profounder questions about the nature of artworks, the changes they undergo and their relation to how we conceive of an artwork's identity – questions that will continue in a wide range of multimedia installations discussed in this thesis. These artworks inherit changeability as a fundamental characteristic manifested through technological obsolescence, decay, alteration and manipulations in the course of their dissemination, exhibition and conservation processes. Their shifting physical appearance confronts conservation with the necessity to depart from the concerns orientated solely to the artworks’ physical constituents and meaning derived from them. For a long time now, this has been the major tenet of conservation, the role of which has been seen chiefly in prolongation of the physical existence of its objects to the future. A paradigm shift has become necessary in order to accept artworks’ inherent dynamism and changeability, and to turn away from the standards that rendered museums a material cast of the world and a place of fixation. This shift challenges not only museum collecting practices but also traditional principles of conservation. In current conservation discourse, critical questions concerning whether and how the changeable nature of artworks might be grasped have forced the move beyond the presumptions pertaining to a static museum object and, accompanying it, the utopian search for its ideal condition. The answers to these questions can only be sought where these disciplines meet and it is precisely at these crossovers that my thesis has been developed.

This thesis poses questions that consider the constitution of ‘conservation objects’ in relation to our understanding of what an artwork is and how it functions within and beyond a certain historical moment. Furthermore, it is to consider the implications of the transformation of multimedia artworks for how we engage with their nature and behaviour. Departing from issues involved in conservation, and looking through the prism of the history of techniques, material culture studies and my professional background as a conservator, I pose questions with both philosophical and historical ramifications concerning what, in the case of multimedia artworks and installations, the artwork is in relation to the change it experiences and how this might affect our understanding of time in which and as which the change occurs. A crucial role in this discussion is played by the rethinking of time in conservation through its intrinsically changeable ‘objects,’ as well as by the consideration of the archive as a final destination of multimedia artworks, but also as their beginning.

3 Among the first publications concerned with new theoretical and practical approaches to contemporary materials, one may find Heinz Althöfer, *Restaurierung moderner Kunst: Das Düsseldorfer Symposion* (Düsseldorf: Restaurierungszentrum Düsseldorf, 1977) and proceedings from the ICOM 5th Triennial Meeting in Zagreb in 1978. For the evolution of this debate, see Oscar Chiantore and Antonia Rava, *Conserving Contemporary Art: Issues, Methods, Materials and Research* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2012), 56-57.
Frame of Reference and Definitions

I define multimedia installations as art forms that are intrinsically compound objects comprised of a series of heterogeneous elements – technology-based and organic media, photographs, sculptural components and painting. Different from the definition of installation art shaped by site as part of their experience (Minimal art, Earthwork and environment), the term ‘multimedia installations’ leans towards the cyclical principle of their de- and re-materialisations that mark different phases of their trajectories.4 Although they take note of the perimeter of the space they reconfigure, the multimedia installations discussed here are primarily heterotemporal entities and hybrid assemblages of materials that are installed and re-installed on the basis of the archive.5 The term ‘multimedia installations’ proposes an alternative to the notions of ‘technology-based installation art’ and ‘time-based media installations’ and acknowledges the multifaceted nature of multimedia – as artworks characterised by both the performance and the physical objecthood of their components.6 In this thesis the notion of ‘time-based’ media will encompass the ways in which media respond to time with possible implications for all artworks.

I propose to employ the notion of changeability to denote an artwork’s potentiality to change under the consideration of aspects of time in which the change occurs. The term changeability is broader than the term ‘variability,’7 which implies sameness rather than difference and variation within set parameters. Encompassing extrinsic and intrinsic change,

4 Installation art as a term related to both the medium and a set of practices is a hybrid notion that can only tentatively be related to what Erica Suderberg describes as a genre informed by set design, Zen garden, soft architecture, happening, bricolage, spectacles, multimedia projections, shrines, earth works, eighteenth and nineteenth-century panoramas, Wunderkammern, cabinets de curiosité and Arte Povera. Erica Suderburg, Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 1-22. I avoid the term ‘video sculpture,’ which leans on the normative museum tradition related to traditional art such as painting and sculpture. Paik himself dismissed this term associating it with sculpture, which he found appropriate for works ‘enclosed’ in themselves, such as those by Shigeko Kubota. Although for him the word ‘installation’ was also ‘not really chic’ – he associated it in German with sanitary installations – I nevertheless decided to use it consistently as ‘multimedia installations’ throughout this thesis. For the terminology used by Paik, see David Ross, “Im Gespräch mit Nam June Paik,” in Nam June Paik: Video Time – Video Space, eds. Toni Stooss and Thomas Kellein (Ostfildern-Ruit: Edition Cantz, 1991), 58.

5 Suderburg addresses the relation of the noun ‘installation’ to the verb ‘to install.’ Suderburg, Space, Site, Intervention, 4. Furthermore, for a discussion on installation as an end product and as a process of a temporal fixation of the object, see Peter Osborn, “Installation, Performance, or What?” Oxford Art Journal Vol.24, No. 2 (2001): 150.


7 In conservation, the term ‘variability’ was coined by the Variable Media Initiative. In this thesis, unless relevant in the context, this term is used only to indicate variants of instantiations based on a score in relation to musical performance and in direct quotations from Paik.
and independently of its desirability and the questions of judgement, changeability goes beyond any reference to some kind of a mean value and may involve a fundamental change as a historical practice.

I define a concept as a concretisation of an artist’s idea(s) that may be conveyed in an instruction or score. This will become a condition of possibility of artworks’ manifestations and, reciprocally, these manifestations will shape a work’s further development on a conceptual level. The artwork’s materiality will encompass the entangled relationships between the artwork’s various manifestations and its concept.

In this thesis, I propose a new theoretical engagement with time in the conservation of multimedia artworks, which may have implications for other media. I am interested in the construction of the identity of multimedia artworks in relation to time, yet time other than the common understanding of the ‘passage of time’ and often conflated with the mode of its measurement. In particular, I test the implementation of Bergsonian durée as a concept of time that supplements the time of decay and ageing in the conservation of multimedia artworks. Moreover, the kind of time I discuss is intrinsic to artworks and their constitutive media; it also provokes a reconsideration of the concept of time, which lies at the ground of conservation and which allows for conceiving of a temporal materiality of media.

I propose to engage with the notion of the archive that involves and yet goes beyond its physical domain as a sheer repository of documents and materials. Here, the concept of the archive implies an engagement with both its physical and non-physical sphere. This concept is crucial for the way in which multimedia artworks acquire their identity in the process of actualisation on the basis of the archive.

The term ‘conservation object’ as used throughout this thesis refers to a quality of an artwork as a subject of conservation’s research and practices. In traditional conservation, the conservation object has often been associated with an object of the Enlightenment that was believed to be sufficiently scrutinised through scientific analysis. In this thesis, however, the term ‘conservation object’ emphasises the context of conservation in which the artwork is being conceptualised – a product of an intentional activity of a conservator, as it were. However, by using this term it is also my intention to criticise the objectification of such an artwork, echoing the stasis of a ‘museum object’ and its reduction to a particular ‘state’ or ‘condition’ discernable by observation, measurement and analysis, rather than comprehending it in a system of relations. Artworks, as I will demonstrate, are more than just ‘objects.’ Rather,

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8 Laurenson, “Authenticity, Change and Loss;” Salvador Muñoz Viñas, Contemporary Theory of Conservation, Oxford: Elsevier, 2005, 3. According to Muñoz Viñas it was only during the Enlightenment that science ‘became the primary way to reveal and avail truths,’ which coincided with public access to art and culture. Furthermore, he explains that artworks and artists acquired special recognition further through Romanticism (special role of an artist and exaltation of ruins) and nationalism (cult of monuments as national symbols). Ibid.

9 Laurenson, “Authenticity, Change and Loss;”
they are products of humans and their culture; they are dynamic entities, the materiality of
which can only be defined in an entangled network of relations and under the consideration
of social and temporal aspects.10

Conservation Theory: Between Tradition and the Innovation

To define the borderlines between new and traditional conservation is a difficult task.11 Whereas
a range of activities in the conservation of contemporary art and multimedia installations
relate to a specific, innovative practice, this does not automatically exclude reverberations of
traditional theory that are still present in them. To be sure, many of these works prima facie
call for a particular approach both in practice and in theory, yet the desirability of such an
approach does not always respond to the implementation of a new theoretical framework.
Experience drawn from years of professional practice and this research has showed me that
conservation, even ‘narrowed down’ to an engagement with contemporary art, is a strongly
heterogeneous field, and that it depends on culture and context. So what I later call the ‘culture
of conservation’ (section 5.7 and 9.6) shaped by geographical location, language, institution,
training and even personal skill and competence on a micro level, has an undeniable impact
on modi operandi in conservation’s theory and practice.

Conservation theory is a minefield of meanings densely populated with a variety of
interpretations. Whereas only few decided to articulate their theoretical propositions under
the banner of ‘theory of conservation,’ many scholars and practitioners nonetheless partake
in the theoretical discourse. To move between various forms of theoretical concretisation and
tacit theoretical ‘knowing’ within conservation communities is a risky manoeuvre. If only to
critically reconsider conservation’s understanding of its ‘object,’ time and archive, of necessity,
this thesis confronts this risk.

At this point, it is important to explain my own theoretical background. My
thinking was shaped by traditional conservation training influenced by Italian (Brandian)

10 While the temporal aspects as I address them in this thesis have not found much attention in professional
literature, for the ‘social’ in conservation see, for instance, Miriam Clavir, Preserving What is Valued: Museum,

11 Throughout this thesis, unless relevant in the context, the term ‘conservation’ replaces the terms ‘conservation-restoration’ often used in South and Central Europe. See also section 6.1.
conservation tradition, aestheticism and technical-analytical skill at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, pragmatism and scientific rigour at the University of Applied Sciences in Cologne and conservation culture of the Istituto Centrale per il Restauro in Rome (currently L’Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione ed il Restauro). Despite this traditional background, my generation matured in the spirit of questioning paradigms of traditional conservation, growing interests in contemporary and modern art (symposium and publication *Modern Art Who Cares?,* 1997 and 1999) and new ways of approaching ‘new media.’

Nonetheless in this pre-shaped professional landscape, and amid the vast number of publications, conferences and seminars, I believe that conservation still seeks to define itself at the crossroads between theory and practice, in between curation, installation practice and creativity, and that the grounds for a new conservation – and perhaps a new conservation philosophy – still have to be laid.

I refer to traditional conservation theory as having been established in the context of the restoration of artworks that are conceived as unique objects (often in a singular medium) and as the creation of an artist-as-genius – its beginning with Vasari and culmination in Romanticism – and linked with that intentionality. The crystallisation of fine art conservation theories were preceded by theories of architectural restoration laid out by Eugène-Emmanuel Voillet-le-Duc in France (restoration ‘in style of’) and opposed in Britain by John Ruskin and William Morris (historic preservation), but also elsewhere by Alois Riegl (theory of values) and Camillo Boito (philological conservation). Although the past century has brought various theoretical voices into the field (Dehlio, Baldini, Conti, Philippot), the historical and aesthetic dimension of restoration found its major expression in the theory formulated and published by an Italian art critic and historian Cesare Brandi in 1963. In his *Theory of Restoration*, Brandi assigns a high eminence to the historical, material authenticity of the artwork. Using the principles of Gestalt psychology, he sees an artwork as a set of relationships between its constituents, rather than their sheer sum, and bases his theory on the presumption of the univocality of artistic intent. Brandian axioms are rather succinct, he postulates, among others, the minimization of the randomness of taste and subjectivity in the process of making

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12 Manifest in writings by Laurenson, Jon Ippolito, Allain Depocas and others.
13 I refer to the concept rather than the literary sense of the contemporary word ‘artist;’ instead, Vasari’s subject is referred to as an *artefice* (artificer).
a decision, the unacceptability of creative conservation and the prohibition of entering the
time of creation.\textsuperscript{17} He further advocates a complete reversibility of a restoration work – a
recognisability of the lacunae – and proposes respect towards the history of an artwork. The
founding principle of his theory was the concept of unity (non-divisibility into constitutive
elements) of an artwork; he further conceived of an artwork in the relation between the
‘aspect’ (\textit{aspetto}) and structure (\textit{struttura}, subject to restoration).\textsuperscript{18} Although the impact of
Brandian thought has since been influential for the professional field, traditional conservation
cannot be seen as homogeneous. The so-called Ruhemann-Gombrich debate published in
\textit{The Burlington Magazine} in 1963, which centred around the controversy that arose due to
the cleaning performed on the paintings of the National Portrait Gallery in London, revealed
that the apprehension of values in conservation may conflict with facts derived from scientific
analysis.\textsuperscript{19} The introduction of scientific analysis to the field resulted in the establishment
of conservation-restoration as an exact science rooted in the nineteenth-century conviction
that truth about objects can be revealed through science;\textsuperscript{20} it also allowed for the separation
of conservation from a working-class artisanship.\textsuperscript{21} Such (traditional) conservation strives to
enforce ‘truth’ conveyed in the object, usually related to its integrity (physical, historical and
aesthetical).\textsuperscript{22} The ability of gaining objective knowledge through scientific analysis led to
the establishment of a notion of ‘original object’ and ‘original condition.’\textsuperscript{23} It can be said that
this eventually led to the view that rendered artworks static in the attempt to arrest change.
Traditional conservation theory added to these dicta that of ‘minimal intervention’, which
was regarded as a fundamental principle in the 1970s and has strongly guided conservation
practices ever since.\textsuperscript{24} The term is closely associated with the term of ‘reversibility’ – both
derivatives of a positivist belief in objectivity.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{17} For an overview of Brandian axioms, see Sebastiano Barassi, “Dreaming of a Universal Approach: Brandi’s 
\textit{Theory of Restoration} and the Conservation of Contemporary Art” (paper presented at the seminar
\textit{Conservation, Principles, Dilemmas and Uncomfortable Truths}, Royal Academy of Arts, September 24,
2009).

\textsuperscript{18} The German translation discerns between ‘Aussehen’ and ‘Stuktur.’ Cesare Brandi, \textit{Theorie der Restaurierung},
transl. Ursula Schädler-Saub and Dörthe Jakobs, \textit{ICOMOS Hefte des Deutschen Nationalkomitees XLI

\textsuperscript{19} The National Gallery cleaning controversy, also known as the Ruhemann-Gombrich debate, revolved
around the cleaning of paintings and issues of intentionality. It is considered crucial as an example of
the rapture between the scientific and technologically driven approach, and the attitudes emphasising
the validity of historic and artistic argumentations (including the ageing and patina and involving
comparative, observational methods). See Cesare Brandi, “The Cleaning of Pictures in Relation to Patina,

\textsuperscript{20} Laurenson, “Authenticity, Change and Loss;” Muñoz Viñas, \textit{Contemporary Theory of Conservation}.

\textsuperscript{21} Philippot, “Restoration From the Perspective of the Humanities,” 217.

\textsuperscript{22} Clavir, \textit{Preserving What is Valued}; Muñoz Viñas, \textit{Contemporary Theory of Conservation}, 65-66; Laurenson,
“Authenticity, Change and Loss.”

\textsuperscript{23} Caroline Villers, “Post Minimal Intervention” \textit{The Conservator} 28 (2004), 3-10; Laurenson, “Authenticity,
Change and Loss.”

\textsuperscript{24} Villers, “Post Minimal Intervention.”

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
The distinction between traditional conservation and ‘contemporary conservation theory’ was clearly articulated by Salvador Muñoz Viñas in 2005 (she speaks of ‘classical’, instead of ‘traditional’); in the field of conservation of time-based media installations the distanciation from traditional conservation and its ‘object’ was undertaken by Pip Laurenson in 2006 and 2011.26 This thesis builds strongly upon these tendencies and is intended as a continuation and expansion of them. Rather than dismissing the old, it contextualises both the tradition of scientific approach (the necessity to study materials) and Brandian heritage, if only in acknowledging relations in artworks rather than just hard facts and following the definition of conservation as a methodological moment of recognition of a work of art in its aesthetic and physical being.27

**One Artist, Manifold Interrogations**

Whether traditional or recent, conservation has long been challenged by a well known, and yet, from conservation’s perspective, unresolved, artistic oeuvre. This thesis is centred around Nam June Paik (1932–2006) as one of the most manifold media artists when it comes to his selection of material, constant readiness to test the implementation of new technologies and cross-boundary activities. His oeuvre encompassing global communication systems and the combination of obsolescence and chance with the high-end technical solutions of his time pose the most challenging dilemmas at the crossroads of curation and conservation, which are exemplary for the diversity of media works in collections. This variety of media and their patterns of historical change were crucial in my decision to focus this thesis on the oeuvre of a singular artist. It can be said, that as no other artist and as a representative of ‘proto new media,’ Paik is a key figure in relation to the questions of presentation, maintenance and conservation of media art in the institutional domain.28 At this point, in order to reveal what is at stake, it is important to explain that, at the time of writing this thesis, only a few works by Paik remained in the same shape as they were conceived and virtually none of his works that function today are displayed with their initial playback equipment. The rapid cycles of obsolescence to which technology-based media are exposed provoke those questions that

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28 I introduce the term ‘proto new media’ as media characterised by the anticipation of the use of technologies including the Internet and new forms of global communication. Paik was a forerunner of the implementation of new media in visual arts in relation to how he used the concepts of connectability, network and global communication, including his seminal video *Global Groove* (1973), the project *Electronic Superhighway* submitted to Rockefeller foundation in 1974, satellite broadcast such as *Good Morning Mr. Orwell* (1984) or *Bye, Bye Kipling* (1986), to name but a few.
Rethinking the Object of Conservation in Multimedia Installations

arise from the reinstallation of components in updated formats, along with the emulation and migration of their data and carriers – aspects familiar to all media installations in collections.29 Moreover, in the phase of pre-production, production and, later, maintenance, through the interdisciplinary network of collaborators, fabricators and mentors, Paik's artworks are bound in social relations and exemplify how people's lives can be engaged with material culture and how artefacts mediate social relationships.30

Paik's legacy in the history of twentieth-century art was his introduction of TV and video as an artistic medium in the 1960s. His artistic achievement, discussed in the first section of this thesis, must be considered in light of the emergence of new artistic forms of media art, in which he takes on the role of a forerunner. Paik was born in Korea in 1932 and grew up in a wealthy family. In 1950, he and his father fled from the imminent Korean War first to Hong Kong and later to Japan. After finishing his studies in music, art history and aesthetics at the University of Tokyo, he moved to Germany in 1956 and continued to study composition and Western music at the Universities of Munich and Freiburg. In 1959, he travelled to Cologne to pursue his interest in electronic music and, later, New Music in Darmstadt. In 1957, he met Karlheinz Stockhausen and, one year later, John Cage – perhaps two of the most significant encounters of his artistic carrier. In 1964, he moved to New York, where he remained for more than forty years.31 Later in this thesis, these biographical connections will be developed in the relation of media art to music.

One of Paik's greatest innovations in terms of art production – but also a challenge in conservation – was that of departing from the rigid notion of a singular authentic object and releasing his work through the production of numerous versions, variations and clones. Moreover, Paik's creative process had an open-ended character, allowing for modifications and interventions long after his artworks began their institutional life as part of museum collections. His art illustrates how the transitory character of new technologies challenges the common understanding of a physical art object and how uniqueness and singularity are being

29 As a preservation strategy, emulation aims at imitating the original appearance of the work as closely as possible to the version considered as point of reference, for example by implementation of a new or other playback and/or display equipment. In digital media, emulation is a means of imitating the function of an old system on a new one. Migration stands for the process of upgrading the equipment and source material. For instance, the DOCAM and Variable Media Glossary designates migration as a change of traditional cathode ray tube TV sets in Paik's Royal Canadian Mounted Police to LCD or plasma screens. Alain Depocas, Jon Ippolito and Caitlin Jones, “Variable Media Glossary” (2003), accessed December 12, 2012, www.variablemedia.net/pdf/Glossary_ENG.pdf. As I indicated elsewhere, there is no specific differentiation between the vocabulary applied to the purely carrier and material-based aspects of a digital work, for instance, and its encoded content. Hanna Hölling, “Versions, Variations, and Variability: Ethical Considerations and Conservation Options for Computer-Based Art,” Electronic Media Review of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (Washington: American Institute for Conservation, forthcoming).


31 Paik died in Miami, on January 29, 2006.
relinquished in favour of the multitude of objects employed in many versions. According to
this, conservation of Paik’s oeuvre becomes primarily the process of acknowledging change
and ensuring the intrinsic fluidity of artworks within the limits of their identity.

Although present throughout this thesis, Paik’s voice left a vast number of possibilities
for interpretation when it comes to questions of the conservation of his legacy. This is also
why, from the conservation point of view, it is so fascinating and, simultaneously, highly
challenging to undertake a journey following his artistic footsteps.

Present Debates and Emerging Challenges

In academic and professional conservation literature, a great deal of attention has been paid
to the recent, non-traditional, multimedia media artworks and installations incorporating
heterogeneous elements and technology. In referring to these, this thesis draws from the work
of many researchers, scholars and conservators preoccupied with these themes without which
a further development of conceptualisation of multimedia works of art would not be possible.

The conservation problems that arise from dealing with variable and changeable
artefacts, and temporally and spatially specific installations with or without technological
components, have been addressed in a number of conferences and symposia, such as
Contemporary Art: Who Cares? (Amsterdam, 9 – 11 June 2010), its predecessor Modern Art:
Who Cares? (Amsterdam, 8 – 10 September 1997), The Object in Transition (Los Angeles,
24 – 26 January 2008) and various research projects such Inside Installations (2004–2007),
and, particularly dealing with problems of conservation and documentation of media art in
a broader sense were Matters in Media Art: Collaborating Towards the Care of Time-Based
Media (2003–2015), Documentation and Conservation of the Media Arts Heritage | DOCAM
2011). A significant contribution to the understanding of these art forms with relation to
the notion of authenticity applied in Western aesthetics were seminal publications such as
the essay Authenticity, Change and Loss in the Conservation of Time-Based Media Installations
authored by Laurenson and the edited volumes Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the
Care of Complex Artworks and Conservation: Principles, Dilemmas and Uncomfortable Truths
with contributions related to understanding installation art in exhibition practice by Glenn

32 Further conferences related to the topic include: From Marble to Chocolate (1995, Tate London), Mortality
The Object in Transition: A Cross Disciplinary Conference on the Preservation and Study of Modern and
Wharton, Jill Sterrett and Tina Fiske. Furthermore, much thinking was accomplished in doctoral dissertations such as *Doing Artworks* by Vivian van Saaze (2009), *Harming Works of Art* by Iris Kapelouzou (2010), *Shifting Structures, Identity and Change in the Conservation and Management of Time-Based Media Works of Art* by Pip Laurenson (2011) and *Scripting Artworks* by Arianne Noël de Tilly (2012). Aspects of exhibition and preservation media and video art were addressed in edited volumes such as *New Media in the White Cube and Beyond* (2008) by Christiane Paul, two volumes *40 Jahre Videokunst* (in 2007 by Wulf Herzogenrath and Rudolf Frieling and in 2010 by Christoph Blase and Peter Weibel) and the recent co-edited volume *Preserving and Exhibiting Media Art: Challenges and Perspectives* (2013). Although published nearly two decades ago on the occasion of a symposium at the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg (25 November 1995), the book *Wie haltbar ist Videokunst? How Durable is Video Art?* (1995) should not be left unmentioned. The author is concerned with, among other issues, the preservation of Paik’s oeuvre, relevant in the context of my thesis. Also worth mentioning is the publication of the Variable Media Network entitled *Permanence Through Change* (2003), which includes essays that engage with practically oriented discussions on the preservation of digital, dynamic works (including Paik’s *TV Garden*). In the context of capturing, presenting and storing media art, the co-edited volume *Present, Continuous, Past: Media Strategies of Presentation, Mediation and Dissemination* (2005) provides a valuable spectrum of thinking on the subject. Last but not least, I should mention the publication *Schweizer Videokunst der 1970er und 1980er Jahre: Eine Rekonstruktion* (2009), which problematises historically informed reconstructions in video installations.


It is also important to acknowledge a number of exhibitions and discussions related to Paik’s oeuvre that have addressed, sometimes indirectly, aspects of the conservation of his works, such as the two retrospectives in Düsseldorf (Nam June Paik: Retrospective, Museum Kunst Palast, 11 September 2010 – 21 November 2010) and Liverpool (Nam June Paik: Video Artist, Performance Artist, Composer and Visionary, Tate Liverpool and FACT, 17 December 2010 – 13 March 2011), as did the recent exhibition Nam June Paik: Global Visionary at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington (13 December 2012 – 11 August 2013). I should also mention the exhibition Seeing Double (19 March – 16 May 2004) at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, which was an outcome of the aforementioned Variable Media Network and which explicitly addressed the issues of conservation of Paik’s TV Garden. Last but not least, a considerable number of conferences and panels have addressed the conservation of Paik’s media, for instance the panel Preserving Nam June Paik’s Video Installations: The Importance of the Artist’s Voice at the MoMA on 16 February 2007 and various symposia at the Nam June Paik Art Center in Seoul concerned with conservation, including the recent Gift of Nam June Paik 5: Man-Machine Duet for Life (12 October 2012).

All in all, the discussion rooted in the conservation of media works of art already has a considerable tradition, which is continued in this thesis by expanding upon several notions and offering a new perspective on aspects that have never been scrutinised before in this form.

For instance, my discussion on the relation between media art and early conceptual art is related to Edward Shanken’s argument that bridges tendencies in conceptual art and technology-based media.40 Furthermore, I seek to enrich the discussion on ontological nearness of musical performance and multimedia installations put forward by Laurenson and expanded upon by Richard Rinehart in the proposed system of notational documentation.41 Laurenson’s essay is served by the theory of musical performance by Stephen Davies and the theory of symbols by Nelson Goodman, which resonate in this thesis in the consideration of the duality of the performed and sculptural elements in multimedia installations.42 The musical association and Goodman’s distinction of autographic (forgeable) and allographic (unforgeable) art is enhanced by related questions of the historical instrumentalisation in relation to the artist’s intention addressed by Richard Taruskin and Randall R. Dipert.43 Last but not least, the aspects of performativity proposed, among others, by J.L. Austin (performatively as

Rethinking the Object of Conservation in Multimedia Installations

‘doing something’ in relation to constative as describing a set of affairs), serves to explain how an object may shift its status by the artist’s declaration once its performance has concluded.44

Although the changeable character of multimedia artworks was studied profoundly and became gradually acknowledged in conservation, there was little attention paid to the nature of the very change. Up until this moment, the acknowledgement of the changeability of artworks has not resulted in rethinking the concept of time in conservation. My thesis is conceived to fill this gap. At its outset, changeability occurs both as seen from the point of view of an observer (researcher) or an instigator (conservator), and is analysed in relation to time. Both change and time – involved in artworks as processes, performances and objects – relate to the identity of artworks that occupies a central position in this thesis. In time-based installations, the shift from material object – its ‘state’ or ‘condition’ – to the discussion of its identity has been pioneered in the aforementioned essay by Laurenson.45 In a different way, the aspect of the identity of works of art in relation to change with a special emphasis on the status of works as ‘heritage’ has been taken up in the doctoral dissertation Harming Works of Art by Kapelouzou.46 From another perspective and commenting on the various remediations of the same artwork, Noël de Tilly studies the identity of film and video installations ‘as a continuum.’47 As a form of a continuation of the discourse on identity, van Saaze puts forward the shift towards a ‘process-oriented’ and – in my view – dynamic notion of authenticity.48 From a different perspective, and relevant for my discussion on time, Kapelouzou takes a further step and explores the possibilities of locating the identity of contemporary artefacts through the application of four-dimensionalism.49 However, she leaves open the question whether a common ontology based on this concept of time-space may be applied to all works of art. Yet what lies beyond these notions – processuality and change – what is and where may we search for the concept of time that underpins conservation?

Conservation literature does not address the aspect of time directly; rather, time underpins conservation and its theories somewhat implicitly. For instance, when we turn to classical examples of conservation literature, the idea of the uniqueness of a historical moment may already be found in writings by Ruskin in relation to built heritage.50 Similarly, Riegl put

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48 Van Saaze, “Doing Artworks.”
forward the concept of a monument situated in a historically distant past.\textsuperscript{51} An implicit concept of time in adapting diverging temporalities of the building and the present may also be seen in the opus of Viollet-le-Duc.\textsuperscript{52} Some thirty years later, leaning on historicism, Brandi’s theory emphasised the uniqueness of the moment of creation and the impossibility of returning to the past.\textsuperscript{53} More recently, it was Caroline Villers and Muñoz Viñas who explicitly addressed the irreversibility of conservation actions.\textsuperscript{54} Again, the aspect of time underpins each of these considerations in an unexplained matter, surfacing only seldom in an articulated form. This thesis aims to fill this gap through a profound reconsideration of the concept of time lying implicitly at the grounds of conservation.

The aspect of time and changeability in conservation directs us to the concept of the archive that harbours the identity of artworks and concludes this thesis. Although I have familiarised myself with a number of theories of the archive, I would also like to point to the concepts of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Sven Spieker as influential in the development of my thinking. Among a wide range of publications, Charles Merewether’s book \textit{The Archive} (2006) comprises a representative plethora of essays that deliver a solid foundation on which to base my archival explorations.\textsuperscript{55} Yet the archival compulsion of the recent decade in academic research, and exhibition and artistic practices seems to have bypassed the field of conservation. In conservation literature, the archive has often been addressed in relation to a repository of documents, archival documentation or artists’ archives. Similarly to the aspect of time, the concept of the archive other than physical space and collection of data seems to have submerged in the interrogation of technical-documentary detail. It is often the issue of – nonetheless most important, yet not exhaustive – practicalities of documentation that is associated with the archive and/or its creation one way or another.\textsuperscript{56} More explicitly, the archive’s role in the re-creation of works has been addressed on the occasion of the Swiss project AktiveArchive that took on the role of the archive in re-installation practices using examples of early Swiss video art.\textsuperscript{57} Furthermore, the Dutch conservator and RCE senior

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Brandi, \textit{Theory of Restoration}.
\item Villers, “Post Minimal Intervention;” Muñoz Viñas, \textit{Contemporary Theory of Conservation}.
\item See, for instance, Part IV in the edited volume \textit{Inside Installations}. In this respect it is important to acknowledge the INCCA database and its Artists’ Archives.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
researcher Ijsbrand Hummelen points to the role of the archive of documentation with a ‘future behaviour in mind.’ Though the registration of artistic practices in the form of interviews and securing traces that are ‘made’ during documentation procedure is, according to Hummelen, intrinsic to contemporary art conservation practices. Although indirectly connected to the archive, the role of prescriptions and instructions in re-installation procedures has surfaced in Noël de Tilly’s doctoral thesis Scripting Artworks. In analysing the re-installation procedures of editioned video installations, de Tilly emphasises the role of the interpretation of the series of prescriptions accompanying these practices. Of interest to my argument, however, remains her view on these artworks as finding their manifestation in many instantiations over time and thus constantly redefining their identity. In this way, and towards the written narrative, Noël de Tilly expands the understanding of identity of time-based works posited by Laurenson as ‘defined by a cluster of work-defining properties which will include the artist’s instructions, artist-approved installations intended to act as models, an understanding of the context in which they were made, and the willingness and ability of those acting as custodians of the work to be sensitive in the realisation of a good installation.’ Noël de Tilly’s notion of scripting as a methodological tool enabling us to understand the conditions and role of different agents in the socialisation of an editioned work will, in my account, take the form of a conservation narrative – a concept based on storytelling that enables the connection of different temporal dimensions that partake in shaping an artwork’s identity in their engagement with the archive. The redefinition of artworks manifest in different instantiations as put by Noël de Tilly will restrain my argument that in the case of multimedia installations, a work’s identity is constantly being re-created, and this recreation has its foundation in the archive. The formation of a discourse on the basis of the archive and the archive as a resource from which artworks (re-)emerge and return to as proposed in this thesis is thus a novelty with regard to the implication for a conservator’s new role both as guardian and instigator of archival content.

How to Get There: Methods and Means

For many years now, a split between conservation, art history and cultural studies has been conspicuous. Concerned with the object, the former mastered itself in shaping artworks’ material occurrence largely divorced from their iconological and philosophical background, whereas the latter discussed the meaning of objects largely ignoring the study of materials,
their changeability and its possible implications. This thesis aims at giving a deeper meaning to objects drawn from changeable material and its possible cultural implications.

In responding to the current status of knowledge and its ‘objects,’ conservation must turn towards epistemologies and methods beyond its disciplinary boundaries. In order to understand conservation in the broader sense of a techno-cultural practice, the method(s) used in the development of this thesis reflect the current urge for a different, more eclectic engagement of conservation studies. This engagement involves the contention with conservation’s past as a discipline, but also with transdisciplinarity (hard sciences, material to art/media histories and cultural studies) and innovative ways of creative thinking about cultural heritage.

In the following, I employ a mixed methodology of empirical and archival research and participant knowledge merging the observational approach, engagement with archival records (including facts based on someone else’s knowledge) and my own hands-on conservation, museum and collection management experience working with a variety of media. At the core of the conception of this thesis lies my two-decades-long practical involvement in the conservation of contemporary multimedia artworks and the empirical and embodied knowledge drawn from the many participative conservation practices in the private and public domain.

Although claiming a certain uniformity, conservation practices are in fact dependent on economy, politics and the cultural context, and differ from one institution to another and from one caretaker to another at the national and international level. My practical experience as a conservator with a variety of stakeholders in public and private museums and private collectors predominantly in Germany and Switzerland (but also in other parts of Europe and in the form of commissions from the United States), has given me an overview of tendencies and approaches to changeable artworks. Despite this multitude of contexts, the methodology lying at its foundation draws largely from the experience I acquired during my employment as a conservator (and later head of department) at the ZKM. The management of media and contemporary art collections, temporary exhibitions and private collections in ZKM’s custody provided a major part of the empirical formation for this project. The specialised knowledge and understanding of media technologies involved in film, video and computer-based installations have shaped this thesis as have the internal knowledge of museum and archive functionalities and metamechanisms governing museum and archival systems. The

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62 For example, I experienced museums of modern art with an emphasis on traditional artworks in their collection (for instance, Ludwig Museum Cologne, Museum Folkwang Essen) as having different preservation policies and priorities regarding multimedia art compared with institutions devoted only to collecting and maintaining media artworks (such as ZKM). Emerging museums showed less experience in maintenance of the collections than those with a long-term presentation and conservation tradition. Rather than being restrictive in the ‘usage’ of objects, I experienced private collectors and private museums as emphasising practical matters in distributing their artworks (for instance Collection Falckenberg Hamburg, Collection Goetz Munich).
direct involvement with artists and the cooperative development of methods of good practice for the preservation and display of heterogeneous artefacts and the considerations that lie beyond these processes contributed considerably to this thesis.

The second methodological layer derives from archival investigations conducted at numerous locations worldwide, including Amsterdam, Bremen, Düsseldorf, Los Angeles, Paris, New York, Tokyo and Seoul. Here, from the conservator actively involved in making decisions, and participating in and overseeing their implementation, my role shifted to one of a participant observer. Rather than shaping the archive of artworks directly, I was immediately dependent on the knowledge of others, the availability of archival information and the attitudes of institutions and people involved. That is to say that this method not only relies on facts recorded in an archival file, but reflects the lack of records, and, at times, its prohibition. But my involvement was by no means inactive – rather, it shifted from active contribution through the practices of reinstallation of artworks towards the active usage of both the record of the archive with the system behind it and the potentiality of the discourse it offered. The moment of stepping back and studying the museum and archival practices of ‘the others’ and the withdrawal from first-degree involvement had a major impact on my thinking about the role of the archive in the discipline of conservation finding its resolution in the final section of this research.

In the conception of my argument in this thesis, the empirical knowledge and facts collected on the basis of the archival research have been paralleled with an in-depth theoretical study of the nature of multimedia artefacts. Although the questions pertaining to the identity of artworks emerged on the basis of everyday conservation practice, the answers necessitated a deeper theoretical engagement rather than only a practical one. For this reason, I venture into critical theory (media theory and contemporary art theory), the so-called continental philosophy, (also analytical) aesthetics, and media and art history in order to accomplish this intellectual task. In searching for the artworks’ identity, I have examined the case examples from the multitude of perspectives that these theories offer. I have used cultural theory to understand time in artworks in and beyond conservation, and social geography to understand the space associated with them. The conceptual framework in the analysis of the provenance of Paik’s oeuvre, its connection to music and its involvement with time has been developed on the basis of the tendencies prevalent in the 1950s to the 1970s and leaned on the socio-political background of these decades.

The thesis introduces seventeen case examples of Paik’s artworks. Two of the three large conceptual sections are preceded with an in-depth analysis of the most relevant artwork or artworks that frame them. As the thesis develops, my argument is enforced by using further examples that emphasise similarities and parallels between the artworks. Addressing the implication of changeability and developing the critique based on time, the examples are reintroduced from the point of view of aspects that only became possible to discuss with
the increasing level of engagement with the argument. Indeed, this method is employed throughout the entire thesis. A distinctiveness of the last section of the thesis is emphasised by the selection of a quasi-historical study, which draws on philosophy and involves artworks as a supportive medium in exemplifying the theoretical layers of these sections.

**Approaching the Identity of Artworks**

In this thesis, three large conceptual frameworks – *Concept and Materiality, Time and Changeability* and *Archive and Identity* reflect my increasing intellectual involvement with the analysis of the ‘object of conservation’ – the multimedia works of art.

As a general overview of the thesis, the first part is concerned with a basic analysis of what is at stake when observing the trajectories of two of Paik's most differing – *Arche Noah* and *TV Garden* – using a linear narrative. The second part takes on the aspect of the changeability of artworks under the consideration of the many variants extrinsic and intrinsic to the works; it introduces three encounters with *Zen for Film*, and conducts a critical contestation with the notion of time that underpins conservation and its ‘objects.’ The final stage of my argument and the third part of the thesis, which I open by discussing the philosophical fable of the Ship of Theseus, resolves the question of the identity of changeable artworks and is a plea for the necessary engagement of conservation with the archive as the site where this identity is produced. The development of my argument is underpinned by the introduction of further multimedia artworks that supplement and expand upon the main examples.

To introduce the structure of the thesis more precisely, it sets off with the investigation of the relation between the concept and material embodiment of installations. It does so while analysing the ‘object of conservation’ at its most basic level and by looking at what lies on the table when engaging with it in museum collections. The parallel introduction of Paik's two manifestly similar multimedia installations *Arche Noah* and *TV Garden* aims at demonstrating that the unveiling of their deeper ontological levels may provide crucial distinctions in the way their identity is perceived. Upon further analysis the dualism of their dependence on material and immaterial strata is paralleled by the divergence in their trajectories – as Paik's most widely known and presented piece, *TV Garden*, and a work known only by a few due to its almost life-long concealment in a vault – *Arche Noah*. The two opening studies are aimed at a most lucid indication of major problems in the reinstallation, presentation and conservation related to a larger portion of multimedia artworks in collections. In addition, I discuss further installations such as *Moon is the Oldest TV, TV Clock, Zen for TV* and *Canopus* in order to intensify my argument and emphasise particular aspects such as the diversity of materialisations of multimedia artworks, their dependence on instruction and their socially invested materialisation. The status of these works as open to changeability inevitably leads to questions regarding the type of change that affects them. Following the urge to not only
examine the change through empirical engagement and observation, in *Time and Changeability* the argument is taken to a further analytical level related to the time at which and in which the change occurs. The introduction of this section describing three personal encounters with *Zen for Film* intends to exemplify the multitude of forms of changeable installations and aims at directing the readers’ attention to multimedia artworks as forms essentially engaged with time. The double meaning of *Zen for Film* lies both in illustrating time processed by the media but also introducing time as a concept in which the change occurs. The study of *Zen for Film* is enhanced by the analysis focused on a respective category of changeability in *Moon is the Oldest TV, Zen for TV, Magnet TV, TV Clock, Random Access, Record Schaschlick, Participation TV, Rembrandt Automatic and TV Garden* and *TV Buddha*. Scrutinising change as a temporal phenomenon from the perspective of a conservator directs attention to the understanding of time in conservation and leads to its subsequent critique. Based on the recognition of different than sequential, homogenous time concepts responding to the heterotemporal nature of multimedia works, in this section the thesis proposes a view of conservation as a temporal intervention. The technological ruins of *Something Pacific* exemplify how the understanding of time in media may shift from dynamic to static, similarly to artworks engaged with time more passively. It also transfers the argument to its final stage in *Archive and Identity*, resolving the problem of the identity of artworks through the concept of the archive. The fable of the Ship of Theseus deliberately provides a philosophical orientation that serves as a stylistic and methodological means to mark the type of engagement necessary to understand the subject of this study. This is enhanced by the introduction of two artworks – *Untitled (Piano) / Piano Piece* and *Hommage aan Stanley Brouwn* – that allow me to investigate the case in which an artwork becomes an archive of its own self. The philosophical orientation of the last part of the thesis serves to explain various theories of identity related to the respective examples and the enunciation of the prerequisite of conservation to engage with questions beyond its objects’ physicalities that are indispensable to establish itself in a broader art-philosophical, historical and critical discourse.
I. CONCEPT AND MATERIALITY
I. CONCEPT AND MATERIALITY

Weighing up the Concept and Material in Multimedia Installations

The practice of conservation and re-installation of a multimedia work of art often faces the problem of its existence as a concept and as a material object simultaneously. Frequently, artworks rematerialise anew with the help of new elements of technological equipment and other constituents on the occasion of subsequent exhibition projects. The reason for this is often sought in and explained by their ‘conceptual’ character. Yet, while observing these various materialisations, the following needs to be considered: What does it mean exactly that a multimedia artwork exists as a concept? And how does the concept of such an artwork relate to its materialisation? In this zone of great fluidity, definitions can fall flat. Whereas the material manifestations of artworks are clearly identifiable and might be translated into the language of documentation, instruction or script, their concept often appears encoded or enigmatic. The more fluid dimension of a pure idea, unless materialised, bears potentially unexhausted possibilities of realisation, fleeting in the creative sphere of the artist’s mind. Moreover, its realisation does not prevent its further development, expressed often in the changing occurrence of works intended by the maker. In the enduring state of becoming, it holds a ‘manual’ for work-defining properties, a significant portion of the constitution of the artwork. What cannot be left unmentioned, however, is a possible pitfall of the strict opposition of a concept and material, since once artworks based on concept become materialised, their existence as a concept may be questioned. As the art critic and media theorist Boris Groys puts it, 'every art is material and can be only material.'

The focus of this section on Concept and Materiality will be on the relation between the conceptual and the material aspects of Paik’s installations, which is crucial both for understanding their nature and for thinking about possible conservation strategies that will take into account their future lives. In this part, the thesis sets off to explore the basic level of the museum’s daily practice and questions that arise when dealing with multimedia, subsequently seeking possible solutions in both the historical and ontological context. Exploring the materiality of multimedia beyond their pure material aspects, I discuss in detail the history of the reinstallations of two of Paik’s multimedia artworks, Arche Noah and TV Garden. I go on to compare examples of Paik’s media art with some tenets of early conceptual art. This leads to the question of the implications for approaches to the conservation of works of art where the concept is contained in a set of instructions or something resembling a ‘score.’ Furthermore, rather than taking the musical connection to media art for granted, I consider

63 In a debate that arose in effect of Paik’s exhibition at the Tate Liverpool in 2010, the blurred boundaries between material and conceptual aspects of Paik’s works are referred to as a ‘lazy path of conceptuality.’ Charles Turner, “December/January Theme on CRUMB: Nam June Paik,” comment on Jon Ippolito, January 23, 2011 (4:01 p.m.) NEW-MEDIA-CURATING, accessed December 9, 2012, www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A2=ind1101&L=new-media-curating&D=0&P=12528.

the origins of Paik’s approach in his early involvement with Fluxus and New Music, and how this leads to questions of the relationships between the heterogeneous elements of his installations. I conclude by considering whether Umberto Eco’s concept of the open work is helpful in understanding the ontological status of such works of art, and what implications this might have for the notion that the conservator should steer clear of the creative process.65 Does the conservator, together with the curator and the assistants involved in installation, not become a collaborator in the materialisation of the concept of an open work?

In the following discussion, two installations represent the correlation between the conceptual and material properties of a multimedia installation. Arche Noah (1989), from the collection of the ZKM, is an artwork that has been acquired and develops its trajectory in a context of one particular (museum) collection. It undergoes what I will call a process of ‘musealisation’ in which it is adapted to the constraints of a museum institution, its maintenance, habits and procedures. From this point onwards, seemingly untouchable and apparently ‘preserved,’ the work reaches a stage of transformation that questions the conventions of a classical museum approach to traditional collectable objects. The second artwork that I discuss concerns one of Paik’s most popular multimedia installations entitled TV Garden (1974). It is particularly interesting for the discussion on the duality of concept and material in multimedia installations due to their assumed conceptual properties and infinite, as it may initially appear, potential for their modification. In contrast to Arche Noah, the physicality of which is expressed in sculptural elements, TV Garden comprises only exchangeable and modifiable components. This, on the one hand, eases the maintenance and re-installations of the piece on the occasion of various exhibitions, and, on the other, complicates the situation when it comes to questions of defining its nature. At times, the tangible material objects, being ingredients of a piece and shaping its occurrence, become contingent and malleable; the installation floats between the initial concept and an indefinite number of its modifications. These issues are made even more complex by the fact that TV Garden, in the course of the almost forty years of its lifespan, has entered the collections of three different institutions. This allows us to observe how heterogeneous stakeholders contribute to its transferability and changeability. In generating an institution-specific identity of the works, collections, as it becomes evident in this particular case, have a strong impact on how media installations are re-installed, conserved and stored, and they way in which they are presented for perception by the spectator.

Bringing together TV Garden and Arche Noah reveals, depending on one’s perspective, as many similarities as differences. It would be too simplistic to see in this decision only the visual similarity in the decorative compilation of plants and TV sets. As I will explain, the

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relation of their material manifestations to the concept presents an intriguing combination of the outmost unexpected modification and the artist’s (erratic) intentionality on the one hand, and presupposed variability and implications of verbal instructions on the other.

In creating the stories of *Arche Noah* and *TV Garden*, I found chronological accounts of their changeable lives in this stage of my argument helpful. Most importantly, however, I abstain from the evaluation of any of their occurrences, which will become crucial for the later discussion on alternative ways of understanding time in conservation (chapter 6).

Discussing both artworks I will shift my role from an actively involved conservator, in the case of *Arche Noah*, to an observer, in the case of *TV Garden*. Due to the former, I will attempt to present an overview of how decisions have been made and how transformation processes are triggered by the system of the museum institution. This example also reflects the lack of documentation and the necessity of the reconstruction on the basis of pictorial data and oral recounting that took place on the occasion of this thesis. In the latter, I will remain an observer, a researcher being involved in an archival exploration in three institutions in possession of *TV Garden*. Simultaneously, I base my account on archival records and assemble an archive, drawing from a wide range of resources.
Chapter 1.
TWO WORKS BY NAM JUNE PAIK

1.1 Arche Noah

Arche Noah was created in 1989 and the work has had a long history. Initially, it was conceived for a gallery exhibition; shortly thereafter, it was purchased and included in the media art collection of the ZKM in Karlsruhe, Germany. Exhibited only twice and both times in different forms, it lay dormant in the museum depository for around sixteen years. Only recently has it been rediscovered and reinstalled in a form that varies slightly from the previous two. A scarcely documented piece that a few decades ago might have been considered simply uncollectible is, nowadays, one of the many examples of changeable contemporary artworks that may be encountered in museum exhibitions (Fig. 1.1).

The creation of Arche Noah relates to the 800th anniversary of the harbour of Hamburg. Die Zeit, one of Germany’s leading newspapers, mentions Arche Noah in the following: ‘And on the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the harbour of Hamburg, Paik designed Arche Noah, which had already been stranded on its mountain. The water of Hamburg’s Alster canal you see on the TV sets does not even moisten the keel. The load of papier-mâché animals, cultural witness of video recordings and images from Hamburg’s harbour is securely preserved from the flood. An idea similar to those taken from a carnival tradition, a cute gesture tinged with apt associations. ’

Arche Noah is composed of a wooden vessel, a large-scale element constructed from the outside, true to the principles of boatbuilding, and determining the entire appearance of the installation. The vessel (about 3.5m long and 1.5m wide) is positioned on a base that confers on it an elevated, extraordinary setting. The hull is made of slats that overlap one another slightly, which were initially stained dark-brown and, at a later stage, decorated with painted symbols of a ship. Owing to the fact that the stern has an open, unfinished structure,

the installation is not thought to be freestanding but, rather, affixed to the gallery wall. The base is decorated with black and white large-scale panoramic photographs that enclose the base of the boat and depict Mount Ararat, the place where Arche Noah is believed to have been stranded. Initially, the photographs were exposed to spectators; later, when the plants were introduced, they were partially hidden behind them.

In the late 1980s, and at the time of the creation of Arche Noah, the artist was interested in the interaction between technology, nature and humans. In the book Video Art: An Anthology (1976) Paik comments: ‘Video art imitates nature, not in its appearance or mass, but in its intimate “time-structure”’. Arche Noah relates to the archaic and biblical themes, the principle of four elements as the basis of the world, the interest in which the artist expressed in the Passage (created in 1989 on the same occasion), the series of Planets. From another perspective, the installation may also emphasise the role of technology in the salvation of humanity facing the moment of the Apocalypse. Paik explains: ‘Why now Arche Noah? … Treibhauseffekt is clear and they will force us to think about the first sintflut …’. From a different perspective, Peter Weibel, the Chairman of ZKM noted in the catalogue Nam June Paik: Werke aus der Sammlung des ZKM (2008) that Arche Noah depicts ‘the first storage of information, the first hard-drive of human beings – a kind of the first database ever.’

The message of Paik’s ‘metaphysics of media’ was to influence and amend our world by its profound comprehension. Yet the idea of salvation may gain another, reciprocal meaning: technology-based media, due to their progressive obsolescence and the enormous difficulty of their conservation and preservation are predisposed to vanish rapidly.

On the technical side, 28 TV sets of two different types of Panasonic colour ray tube monitors (CRT) are placed at the base of the boat and on the deck, forming a two-storey tower. The TV sets situated face-up at the bottom of the installation surround the base of the vessel. At a later stage, various exotic plants were arranged around the base, partially mantling the TV sets. An additional tower-like arrangement of TV sets was placed on the deck. An integral part of the installation was composed of colourfully painted papier-mâché animals depicting two flamingos, two iguanas, a dog, a giraffe, a pig and a snake. Originally, the deck

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71 The number of monitors viewable on the documentation photographs varies. The set of monitors implemented in 2009 consisted of ten Philips 21GR9750/02B and eighteen Philips 70KD2726/42R.
was decorated with a coloured banner that can be seen only in the first photograph of the installation. As the later documentation photographs show, despite the Weisses Haus show in 1989, this particular ensemble has never been installed again.

*Arche Noah* was created as a three-channel video work. The video was operated using a laser disc, as was the case with many of Paik’s artworks at the time. Due to the latest migration of the hardware to newer technology, the playback runs on three flash card players. Six modified video routers are built in. The visual information is repeated at regular time intervals and the images appear in pairs transversely. As in almost all Paik’s installations, the video’s pictorial content, reveals the rather playful character of random video assemblages composed of various fragments of moving images. The visual attraction lies in their varying graphical forms and compositional artfulness. As with many of Paik’s video works, the installation lacks any audible element.

Up until 2009, any documentation of the installation was rather scarce and there are only a few records of *Arche Noah*’s exhibitions in the museum’s archives. This is owing to the fact that at the early stages of ZKM’s existence (the centre was founded in 1989), there was neither a conservation department nor an established archival structure. On a broader scale, the beginning of institutional collections of time-based media installations faced various difficulties related, among others, to poor infrastructure and a lack of documentation of artworks not only in Europe, but also on the American continent.

To reconstruct the entire lifespan of *Arche Noah* is therefore a meticulous process that can only succeed by putting together the diverse pieces of the puzzle. In doing so I will pay special attention to the adaptation of the object by the museum after its long period in storage, its re-discovery and, furthermore, the conceptualisation of its future existence as an exhibition object. I have divided the trajectory of *Arche Noah* into two sections: its life *before* and *after* its ‘re-discovery’ in 2006. The early period of *Arche Noah*’s existence is characterised by its first displays, its acquisition and transformations in the course of an ongoing process of creation or, as seen from a different angle, due to the artist’s changing intentions. The latter is the time of the detachment of *Arche Noah* from the effects of his intention when the first inventory was being completed. Coincidentally with the artist’s death in 2006, *Arche Noah* is recovered from the museum depot and begins its ‘afterlife.’ Two years later, it receives the status of an exhibitable artefact with all its consequences – its adaptation to institutional constraints and its modification.

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Arche Noah’s Manifold Life Before

Arche Noah was assembled by Paik’s assistant and fabricator in Germany, Jochen Saueracker, on the occasion of the opening of Weisses Haus in Hamburg, Germany in 1989 (Fig. 1.2). The photographs of this venue (on which I largely base my analysis) and the oral accounts of Paik’s curator in Bremen and Cologne Wulf Herzogenrath, the owner of the gallery Thomas Wegner and Saueracker reveal how Arche Noah began its unsettled but otherwise interesting life.73

It was Herzogenrath who introduced to Wegner the idea of exhibiting Paik. Weisses Haus was the first exhibition space designed for video, sound and light installation in Germany. Fulfilling a dream of any connoisseur of new media, the gallery was equipped with its own U-matic players and floor sockets to plug in video hardware.74

The Weisses Haus photograph shows the installation with the arrangement of TV sets that remained virtually unchanged throughout the object’s lifespan, including the tower-like composition on the deck and a free arrangement of monitors placed face-up at the bottom.75 On the upper monitors a two-channel video was created following the manner of shortcuts of images representing themes related to the archaic and modern civilisations. Interestingly, the photographs taken on the occasion of the Weisses Haus exhibition depict the monitors with a blue, presumably static image. There are two possible reasons for this: technically, one possibility presumes that one channel of the installation was not receiving video information at the moment the photograph was taken.76 According to Herzogenrath, however, the Weisses Haus video showed – in a close-circuit mode – the river Alsterlauf next to the gallery. Herzogenrath: ‘Arche literally drifted on the water played on the lower monitors. If someone was canoeing on the canal one could have seen him on the monitors. Closed circuit was a rarely used technology at that time.’77 Wegner maintains that this was originally his idea and that in his archive he still possesses the camera responsible for the

73 Wulf Herzogenrath (former director of the Kunsthalle Bremen), in discussion with the author, March 2010; Thomas Wegner (Head of Weisses Haus in Hamburg), in discussion with the author, December 2012; Jochen Saueracker (Paik’s former collaborator), in discussion with the author, June and August 2010.


75 Weisses Haus issued not only an invitation with separate photographs in the form of panoramic postcards, but a playful kaleidoscope – ‘Plastiskop’ – in the form of a mini TV set, where the viewer was able to see every image of the presented installations by looking through a mini viewfinder and turning a knob. Archive of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam; Erik Andersch Collection, Archive of the Nam June Paik Art Center in Seoul.

76 Unlike the newer generation of LCD and plasma televisions that remain black, a CRT monitor shows a monochrome blue image while receiving no image information.

77 Herzogenrath, discussion.
live rendition of the river. This explicit site-specific character that would have been lost during consequent reinstallations, reflected the relationship that *Arche Noah* had not only with its closest neighbourhood, but also with Hamburg as a harbour. Colourful papier-mâché animals together with brightly coloured banners decorated the boat humorously. According to Herzogenrath, their ordinary, almost naïve character embodies Paik’s typical gesture to contrast the seriousness of the ‘hard’ technology. Shrill, fancy colours and the hoisted banner lend the installation a vivid and a joyful character. Christoph Grau, then art teacher, produced the animals with ninth-year pupils (ca. fourteen years old) at the local school in order to finance the class’s study trip to Italy. The improvised character of the afterhours workshop during which the animals were created explains the fact that some are not paired. It is also striking that at Weisses Haus the boat was not yet painted but stained a dark-brown colour.

Heinrich Klotz, the founding director of ZKM, acquired the installation for the collection shortly thereafter. In 1991, it was presented at *MultiMediale 2* at the Opel Factory in Karlsruhe (Fig. 1.3). The image of this venue shows *Arche Noah* in a confined gallery space; besides the fact that the banners seemed to have vanished, another change appeared on the vessel. Magnification of the image uncovers painted inscriptions and numerous paint drippings on the floor and on the TV sets. It is therefore likely that the paint originated in Karlsruhe and that the actual painting took place on location just moments before – or even during – the work’s exhibition. It is also perhaps the only record of the direct involvement of the artist with the installation. It is unclear whether the video showing the river had been maintained. The paintings depict small-scale pictograms of ships and fish, the artist’s signature and the title of the work with some corrections. The inscriptions are in Chinese and Korean; the 白南準 signifies Paik, Nam June, 노아 – Noah, 方舟 – squared ship and 함 battle ship. There is an obvious analogy to Paik’s other works, reminding us of *Canopus* and *Passage* (1986) from the ZKM collection. The colour is a mixture of green, red, yellow and white paint, most probably acrylic, on the wooden planking of *Arche Noah*, whereas *Passage*, for instance, is decorated with silver calligraphy and Canopus with black. Compared with the Weisses Haus installation image, at first glance one may notice that the animals are positioned

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78 The animals were made of a chicken wire, wheat paste and waste paper, and painted in acrylics. Grau recalls that he personally proposed to create the animals with the class when he heard about Paik’s project. Although Paik approved the ensemble, Grau remembers his disappointment that the work of his pupils was not acknowledged by the artist during the opening. Christoph Grau, in discussion with the author, December 2012.


80 Translation by Yunjun Lee.

81 The information is based on a macroscopic, comparative examination of the paint layer of Paik’s various works and my archival research conducted at Paik’s factory in Cincinnati. Furthermore, my discussions with Mark Patsfall revealed that Paik preferred a prefabricated, acrylic-based tube paint, which he often used unmixed ‘directly from the tube.’ Mark Patsfall (Paik’s former collaborator), in discussion with the author, April 2011.
slightly differently. This becomes evident while focusing on the pair of flamingos that have been shifted to the rear of the vessel. The snakes were moved to the right and the pig appeared on the left side of the deck.

According to the records of the ZKM, the installation was loaned to the Spanish Fundació Joan Miró in Barcelona in June 1992 as part of the show *Electronic Art* (1 July – 2 September 1992). Unfortunately, nothing documenting this venue was retrievable. \(^{82}\) Saueracker recounts that at this stage Paik decided to rethink the spatial setting and modify the mode of interaction between the exhibition space and the artwork. As a result, a large number of local plants were placed near the base. The resemblance of this gesture to what happened with the electronic garden of the earlier *TV Garden*, which I will discuss shortly, is striking. \(^{83}\) The viewers could, just as in the Düsseldorf version of *TV Garden*, observe the installation from an elevated level.

**Arche Noah’s Afterlife**

In October 2006, when I joined the conservation department of the ZKM, I immediately became involved in an extensive project of moving the external depot of ZKM to its new location. \(^{84}\) It was then that I encountered *Arche Noah* for the first time, assessing, documenting and recording its diverse elements for the newly created conservation file. The work was in a rather poor condition – the animals had deteriorated and were unstable and dusty. Having no instruction or inventory at hand, it was impossible to ascertain that the architectural elements – the structure of the work and the painted slats – comprise the complete inventory of the work. The playback equipment was present in the form of a database entry, and was being stored in another depot and, as I later learned, occasionally used in other installations of the collection. We were groping around in the dark. After a thorough documentation, we decided to perform a cleaning treatment and bridge any tears and fissures in any materials that were endangering their stability. Some of the animals, due to their very fragile structure, were given a supporting construction, making it possible to relocate them without risking any damage. At the time, neither a re-installation nor an extensive investigation was rendered feasible; therefore the plan was to store the work until the moment when time and available

\(^{82}\) Despite efforts undertaken to reconstruct this 'Spanish manifestation' of *Arche Noah*, the prospects of retrieving the photographs documenting it are not optimistic. According to Saueracker the number of plants by far exceeded the dimensions of the 2009 ZKM/EnBW ensemble. Jochen Saueracker (Paik’s former collaborator), in discussion with the author, June and August 2010.

\(^{83}\) Saueracker, discussion.

\(^{84}\) *Hockhalle* gave way to a depot with a much larger capacity, higher storage standards and a higher level of security. On the occasion of the relocation, much of the media installations were recorded, catalogued, repacked and assessed. The project was time-consuming, involving over ten specialists for a period of two months. My participation in this project not only allowed me to gain a profound insight into the recovery of a number of pivotal media works of early history of institutional collecting, but also largely inspired this thesis.
personnel would make it possible to schedule a re-installation. Consequently, in 2006, the artwork continued to exist in its disassembled, deactivated form.

The reinstallation took place two years later, in 2008, nearly sixteen years after its last presentation and two years after the relocation of the depot. With the prospect of an upcoming exhibition in the premises of Energie Baden-Württemberg (EnBW) Karlsruhe, a test installation was undertaken in order to accomplish the inventory and to document the object in a built-up shape. In my role as a conservator in charge, together with a team of assistants, I was actively involved in completing the documentation of the installation and monitoring its proper assembly. Significant for further development of *Arche Noah* was the fact that Saueracker was consulted on re-constructing the structure from the original parts. Sketches and photographs were taken and the electronic equipment was controlled and operated. Due to the fragility of the laser disc player originally used and reflecting ZKM’s preservation policy, a decision to digitalise the video data was made. Digitisation in the form of a migration from the original laser disc to the digital carrier – a flashcard player – was conducted at the Laboratory of Antique Video Systems of ZKM. The lower monitors show a different video than the closed circuit rendition from *Arche Noah*’s Weisses Haus version, a compilation that must have occurred during the course of the reinstallation at the Spanish Foundation. In the photographs taken during the re-installation, and later published in the exhibition catalogue, both the animals and plants are missing (Fig. 1.4).

On the occasion of the exhibition *Nam June Paik: Werke aus der Sammlung des ZKM* (*Artworks from the ZKM Collection*, 23 October 2008 – 18 January 2009), *Arche Noah* was displayed for the first time since 1992 after its long storage interval (Fig. 1.5). As the images reveal, more than forty different kinds of plants decorate the base of the vessel. Observing the flashing images between the green plants – a performance of *Arche Noah* after its assemblage – I could not help but have the impression of watching a fragment of an electronic jungle known from *TV Garden*. It is also remarkable in this respect that the Karlsruhe version of Paik’s *Arche Noah* comprised only exotic office plants. Because neither an instruction nor documentation of the artwork existed, the plant ensemble must have been recreated on the basis of photographs of *TV Garden*. The choice and the dimension of the arrangement with the striking presence of white flowerpots was made freely and executed by the team handling the artworks in consultation with Saueracker. Due to a curatorial decision legitimised by an

85 Other conservators involved included Antoaneta Ferres and Doreen Jäger.
86 The photographs were published in the exhibition catalogue: Brümmer at al. *Nam June Paik*, 23-25.
87 The exhibition took place at the Foyer of the EnBW building in the Durlacher Allee 93, Karlsruhe.
88 The number of plants according to the list from the archive of the ZKM art-handling department.
unsatisfactory condition and lack of financial resources to conduct the conservation prior to the show, the papier-mâché animals were missing.\textsuperscript{89}

Here, for the first time, the impossibility of keeping \textit{Arche Noah} in its constructed form became manifest. The dimensions of the vessel not only did not allow the installation to be moved even within the museum interior but also rendered potential prospective loans outside the museum impossible. Yet the crucial factor for the decision to re-build the structure was the prevention of irreversible damage that would have occurred as a consequence of fixing the slats every time anew (Fig. 1.6).\textsuperscript{90} Saueracker, in cooperation with the conservation department and the technical staff of the museum, performed the modifications in June 2009. The inner construction of \textit{Arche Noah} was replaced with a new one conceived to enable dismantling of the vessel without having to take apart its planking (Fig. 1.7). As a consequence, the vessel consists of an entirely new interior that allows the main part to be taken apart into two singular elements and a base. All the wooden elements are transportable. The original construction is stored and may serve as a record of how \textit{Arche Noah} was constructed before it was modified. Meanwhile, a specialist in paper conservation restored four large-scale photographs of Mount Ararat that are wrapped around the base of \textit{Arche Noah}. The question of whether a replacement of photographs would be considered a long-term preservation solution for the poor shape of the original arose soon after the conservation measures. The proximity of plants that contain organic dye and humidity (and which have to be watered) was the main reason for the suggestion, just as much as the desire to avoid further tears and damage. In the course of the discussions, the idea of storing the original photograph while displaying a replica gradually developed.\textsuperscript{91} Since June 2009, \textit{Arche Noah} has been stored at the ZKM depot. It is in store for future displays in its old but somewhat modified shape.

When observing \textit{Arche Noah}'s past materialisations it occurs to me that aside from the painted vessel all other elements can be either replaced, replicated, migrated or emulated. Certainly the animals remain another ‘stable’ sculptural element once conserved. Therefore \textit{Arche Noah} lives its life somewhere on the threshold of a physical and a conceptual entity, dictated by conservation policies, the ephemeral status of technological components and the cyclical character of the plant ensemble.

Considering the decisions that were made and the final results of both the migration of the playback equipment and the modification of the structure, it could be maintained that what actually happened to \textit{Arche Noah} in 2008–2009 was its musealisation. Musealisation,

\textsuperscript{89} As a conservator in charge, I was involved in planning conservation treatment that had been rejected due to financial constraints prior to the exhibition and was still in question when I completed the research for this chapter in 2011.

\textsuperscript{90} A restoration of planking elements had to be already undertaken due to the ruptures that resulted from repeated mounting of the slats to the structure.

\textsuperscript{91} In a later conversation with one of the ZKM’s art technician in August 2010, I learned that all photographs have since been duplicated at the ZKM’s laboratory.
following the concept of the Czech museologist Zbynek Stránský, is a process of transformation of the object from its primary context to the museological context.\textsuperscript{92} In relation to \textit{Arche Noah} and the problem of relics discussed further in this thesis, musealisation denotes an adaptation of a work of art to the demands and policies of the institution harbouring it; it is a domestication of sorts.\textsuperscript{93} This links us again to the term of the afterlife that I have chosen to use according to the German philosopher, sociologist and musicologist Theodor Adorno who assumes that works being musealised are deprived of their initial vitality.\textsuperscript{94} And although for Adorno, art is being revived in the museum context, when one follows the aesthetics of the American philosopher John Dewey, relegating art to the museum comes with separating it from the experiences of everyday life.\textsuperscript{95} Art historian Deborah Cherry offers a different perspective on the afterlife; Cherry shifts the meaning of afterlife to the 'promise of survival, of living-on, through change.'\textsuperscript{96} For \textit{Arche Noah} this process commenced with its 2008–2009 adaptation to satisfy museum requirements. Paradoxically the very process of display that triggers the damage of the artwork (repeated fixation of the planks) had an impact on the modification of its structure to satisfy the museum's obligation to display artworks. The prerequisite for this process was the necessity for the work to be built up, presented and thus perceived by the viewer. Earlier, \textit{Arche Noah} was just an installation like many other stored artefacts, lurking in a silent place of a museum depot and awaiting rediscovery. As in many other cases of installation art, its afterlife brought with it a simultaneous modification, adaptation and change.

Very intriguing in the story of \textit{Arche Noah} and its musealisation is the way in which it problematises the role of the museum in safeguarding ephemeral and evolving artworks. Can

\textsuperscript{92} Stránský also introduces the term of museality, which refers to the meanings attributed to objects as a consequence of their musealisation, thus defining musealogy as a study of musealisation and museality. Peter van Mensch, "Museology and Management: Enemies or Friends? Current Tendencies in Theoretical Museology and Museum Management in Europe," in \textit{Museum Management in the 21st Century}, ed. E. Mizushima (Tokyo: Museum Management Academy, 2004), 3-19.


\textsuperscript{95} John Dewey, \textit{Art as Experience} (New York: Penguin Group, 2005(1934)).

the withdrawal of endangered artworks from its display safeguard the legacy, or is the legacy rather safeguarded by allowing the artworks’ lives to continue? Do institutional custodians run the risk of incarcerating dynamic artworks by trying to force them into static structures, creating a mausoleum rather than adapting a new concept of the museum? Furthermore, a question arises pertaining to the role of conservation in the institutional domain and the position it takes. Are we as conservators obliged to follow the institutional structures or ethical rules of the profession? And what if, precisely at this moment, the rules and the approach to these types of works still need to be created? I will strive to answer these and similar questions in the development of this thesis.

The relation between Arche Noah and TV Garden is interesting not only from the point of view of its succession but also regarding how Paik balances the material and conceptual aspects of the technological and organic elements in relation to each other. In Arche Noah, one may encounter the loosely implemented idea of a sculptural arrangement of physical objects on the one hand, and, on the other, an entirely ephemeral composition comprising extremely fugitive – but in an obviously different way – materials, namely organic plants and TV sets, freed from any rigid prescription for the form of its materialisation.

1.2 TV Garden

TV Garden came into being in 1974 as alternately TV Sea or Garden with twenty monitors presenting thirty minutes of a breath-taking rush of split and synthesised images of the earlier video Global Groove by Paik and John Godfrey (1973, Fig. 1.8).97 It was Paik’s last show at the gallery owned by Fernanda Bonino, Paik’s first dealer in America. In addition to his artistic qualities, Bonino’s interest in Paik resulted from her wish to generate some publicity for the newly opened uptown gallery space in New York.98 As she recalls, Paik’s works did not sell during the entire decade, but with the lively young talent the gallery was brought the attention it needed, helped by the presence of the German artist and partner of Stockhausen, Mary Bauermeister (who Paik knew from Cologne) and Paik’s downtown avant-garde friends – Allan Kaprow, John Cage, Merce Cunningham and Allen Ginsberg.99 Art historian and Paik researcher Edith Decker-Phillips maintains that the first version of TV Garden lacked plants due to economic reasons – Paik could not afford to purchase so many exotic plants at the

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99 According to Nanda Bonino, the market for Paik’s works was almost non-existent. Ibid.
Two Works by Nam June Paik

Two Works by Nam June Paik

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time. TV Garden was shown again, among other cities in Syracuse and Philadelphia, before perhaps its most significant presentation during documenta 6 in Kassel, Germany in 1977. It was Paik’s first large-scale installation employing some thirty monitors lying on the floor, face-up, amongst a dense ensemble of tropical plants (Fig. 1.9). Herzogenrath maintains that in comparison with the rather reduced version shown by Bonino, the documenta 6 (and first European) materialisation of Paik’s concept that fully enfold its spatial qualities, being accessible from all sides. Paik also installed it himself.

The TV Garden embraces generic monitors playing Global Groove in a pulsing rhythm of its changing images. The sound of Global Groove – music, acoustic effects and voices, which Paik liked to be played rather loudly – constitutes a dominant element of the work. A dark gallery space is a prerequisite to perceive the ensemble. Resisting Paik’s promise, the symbiosis of technology and nature appears here less harmonic; the organic exuberance seems to contain the installation, to supersede the artificial shining of the screens. Now and again, ironically, when their own electronic light permits it, the geometric, sculptural presence of cubical television sets interrupts the entropic greenness. There is, seemingly, an organic dominance in the space generated by the plants, at least at first glance, providing the viewer with a sensory encounter. Yet after a while, the organic character appears to be taken over by the constant pulsing flow of the electronic image, being related both to the aesthetic, visual experience of the installation as well as to the experience of its time. The time diverges here; it has a different quality in the compilation of these two elements. It is organic time and media time that one encounters in TV Garden, and – organic media time, simultaneously. The organic duration of plants accords with the biological processes of growth and decay – a photosynthetic lifecycle – with neither a certain expiry date, nor a guarantee of longevity. The video footage presents us with a mixture of flow and artificially edited time, compressed to a certain span of recorded images, displayed with the accuracy of the controlled sequentiality and scheduled point of death and rebirth, stop and restart. The fusion of the organicity of natural time and the technological time of progress might deem Paik’s garden a naturalisation

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102 Herzogenrath claims that in contrast to Paik’s other videos in which the pace and change of visual content was prevalent, TV Garden’s video should involve the viewer and allow him/her to view the content for a while. This is also one of the reasons Paik wished to build up a barrier on which a viewer could lean. Herzogenrath, discussion.
104 For an analysis of installations invoking sensory perceptions, see Deborah Cherry, “A Sea of Senses,” in Right About Now: Art and Theory Since the 1990s, eds. Margriet Schavemaker and Mischa Rakier (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2007), 16-25.
of technology, a representation of an ideological ‘second nature.’ This technological and organic assemblage relates to the flow towards an unexpected end, when the media become obsolete and replaceable, and repeat their cycles in continuous recurrence of their representations.

The core element of TV Garden – the video Global Groove – starts with the following announcement: ‘This is a glimpse of a video landscape of tomorrow, when you will be able to switch on any TV station on the earth and TV guides will be as fat as the Manhattan telephone book.’ Paik’s introductory statement stands for the tape’s compositional principle and message – global channel surfing – which in 1973 constituted a visionary precursor of subsequent developments. The web platform Media Art Net describes TV Garden as follows: ‘The furiously edited “Global Groove” video playing on the screens of the TV sets flickers and flashes through the mesh of green. Ambiguous like most of Paik’s works, this one leaves open the question of whether we are dealing with a symbiosis of nature and technology, or whether the new media are leading us back into the jungle with their disordered mass of rampant images.’ Taking into account the technological developments of the past fifty years, this video presents us with a fascinating picture of this decade. We are, as the media theorist Wolfgang Ernst puts it in his media-archaeological exercise, ‘dealing with the past as a form of delayed presence, preserved in a technological memory.’ The key feature of this extraordinarily playful work is, according to Herzogenrath, the perspective from which the audience experiences it: the viewer is located on the elevated ramp and may observe the garden ‘from above’ (Fig. 1.10).

From the perspective of their on and off status, it is interesting to consider the ‘stand-by condition’ of this ensemble in relation to other installations transmitting moving images or light. So taking, for instance, a single channel video of any artist – once unplugged, it reverts into the technical body of its playback device; it could be any video, by anyone: once it is unplugged, its continuity is disrupted. This also happens to the haunting beauty of Flavin’s fluorescent bulbs that vanish from the space, reducing the work to a static structure of its plain mechanics. Aesthetically, just like TV Garden’s video content, it ceases to exist, transferred to a bare lifeless apparatus of which Flavin was well aware emphasising the ‘ironic humour of temporal monuments.’ Once unplugged, the temporal monument of TV Garden insinuates its living status in a peculiar presence of its plants, resisting extinction by the interruption of electric current. Its persistent continuum rests somewhere between the sculptural presence

107 Herzogenrath, discussion.
of its monitors – sunken in darkness – and the undisturbed greenness of its plants with their
discernable, delicate scent discreetly disseminated through the room. The sound is shut down,
yet the life continues.

In their changeability, installations often lack boundaries. Ever since its exhibition
at the documenta 6 in 1977, TV Garden has become a popular instance of the visionary
implementation of electronic media merged with plants in the playful symbiosis of a techno-
ecological garden, and has travelled to various exhibitions around the globe. In the course of
its continuous re-installations, the number of monitors has increased to 120 and the number
of green plants to 600. The Whitney Museum version of TV Garden from 1982 (with 28 TV
sets and around 100 plants), curated by John Hanhardt, shows the TV sets embedded amidst
plants in an amorphous yet balanced way (Fig. 1.11). The viewer observed the installation
from an elevated L-shaped platform. Just one year later, in 1983, the Belgian version curated
by Laurent Busin was created following only a rough sketch by Paik. Responding to the limited
space of the gallery, Busin designed a self-enclosed form resembling a four-step pyramid,
from which the uppermost platform visitors were able to view the ensemble. Although it was
originally conceived as a one-channel video installation, in Wellington, New Zealand (The
World Over: Art in the Age of Globalization, City Gallery, 1996), Paik authorised a second
video channel.109

Taking into account the different versions in which it occurred, the question arises
of how TV Garden could become divorced from any certain kind of materialisation. Evidence
might be traced back to 1996 when Paik instructed Brazilian curators to install TV Garden,
TV Fish (1975) and TV Buddha (1974) while working with him from a distance.110 They were
encouraged, according to Stephen Vitiello, to 'get their own plants, their own fish, their own
Brazilian Buddha.'111 Despite the number of TVs indicated as 'not less than thirty' in variable
sizes, Paik urged Vitiello who tried to pin him down on how to construct the Garden, to use
his judgement.112 This may also designate a group of Paik’s installations recreated from an
instruction as artworks reassembling the ways in which a number of conceptual artworks

109 Nam June Paik’s TV Garden was a case study within the project Variable Media Network (VMN), accessed
October 10, 2009, http://www.variablemedia.net/e/welcome.html. According to the VMN transcript
and the Guggenheim conservation documentation, if the installation has over 40 monitors, it can be
supplemented with another channel with the video Oriental Paintings. In New Zealand, TV Garden was
presented on sharp orange mulch and decorated with plants different than the Euro-American type of

110 The often interchangeably used titles Video Fish and TV Fish may cause confusion. Whereas Video Fish
(1975) consists of a variable number of monitors with aquariums, live fish and TV sets playing video, TV
Fish (2004), such as shown at the James Coleman Gallery in 2009, involves only two fish tanks/monitor
elements. In the following, Vitiello, for instance, refers to TV Fish having in mind the multiple monitor

111 Preserving the Immaterial.

112 ‘… When I started trying to pin him down on how to construct these pieces, his favourite thing is, "Use
your judgment."’ Ibid.
became materialised. In this manner, *Moon is the Oldest TV* (1965) and *Video Fish* have been loaned to Paik's Düsseldorf and Liverpool's retrospective.113

The museological life of *TV Garden* commenced in 2000 when it entered the Guggenheim Museum Collection in New York. This acquisition was preceded by its Guggenheim exhibition on the occasion of *The Worlds of Nam June Paik* (11 February – 26 April 2000, Fig. 1.12). The photographs reveal a very distinct arrangement: the elevated ramp for the viewer is no longer present and the installation lacks the earlier defined space of a rectangular gallery.114 Adapted for the constraints of the Frank Lloyd Wright building, the Guggenheim re-installation raised a debate as to the degree to which the work can be modified and whether the given characteristics of the gallery space may legitimise such modification.115 Furthermore, Paik allows for an addition of a second video channel – most probably a video entitled *Oriental Paintings*, which I was unable to retrace during my research.116 In light of the discussion related to its previous arrangement in the open space of the rotunda, it is intriguing that on the occasion a subsequent display of *TV Garden* (*Moving Pictures* 28 June 2002 – 12 January 2003) that took place in an enclosed space of the Guggenheim Museum, New York a couple of years later, both the viewers and the museum staff expressed dissatisfaction with this version (Fig. 1.13).117 In 2004, *TV Garden* entered the collection of the K21 (Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Ständehaus) in Düsseldorf, ’Paik’s adoptive home.’118 The comprehensive conservation documentation reveals the types of monitors, plants and maintenance procedures.119 Set in a rectangular, dark room and accessible only from the front from a platform, the installation was constructed entirely by Saueracker and approved by Paik. Due to the enormous difficulty of maintaining the living plants on a permanent display, chief conservator Werner Müller removed the traditional pots and replaced them with hydroponic plants (Fig. 1.14).120 A plant-care company was hired to maintain them.

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113 Susanne Rennert (curator of Paik’s retrospective at the Kunstpalast in Düsseldorf), in discussion with the author, August 2010.
114 The conservation file reveals that, prior to the installation, an idea of a scrim or curtain was considered to enclose the space and protect it from the dispersed light of the rotunda. Archive of the conservation department, Guggenheim Museum, New York.
115 For a discussion on the different types of execution of the installation see Preserving the Inmaterial.
116 Caitlin Jones and Paul Kuranko (former employees of the Guggenheim Museum, New York), in discussion with the author, December 2010. Apparently neither *Oriental Paintings* nor the *Global Groove* is part of the collection of the Guggenheim Museum. In order to play the video, the museum has to request it from the EAI. Conservation documentation, archive of the conservation department, Guggenheim Museum.
117 This manifestation of *TV Garden* was arranged in a space protected by a scrim, and the audio was too low. Carol Stringari (Head of Conservation, Guggenheim Museum, New York), in discussion with the author, December 2010; Jones and Kuranko, discussion.
118 Archive of the conservation department, K21, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf.
119 Ibid.
120 Werner Müller (former head of conservation K21, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf), in discussion with the author, October 2010.
On the occasion of Paik's larger retrospective at Tate Liverpool, *TV Garden* was shown for the first time in Great Britain (17 December 2010 – 13 March 2011, Fig. 1.15)." Interestingly, although the installation was borrowed from K21 in Düsseldorf, the physical shipment from Germany consisted solely of an instruction and a digital carrier of the video *Global Groove*. Jon Huffman, Paik's technician and curator of the estate, supervised the installation that comprised newly acquired elements from local suppliers. Even more striking, however, is the fact that after the exhibition was finished, the playback and display equipment acquired by Tate Liverpool from a local supplier was shipped to the Nam June Paik estate in the United States and stored there for future re-installation.

Following the Guggenheim and the Düsseldorf acquisitions, the Nam June Paik Art Center in Yongin, Seoul, Korea, installed its own version of *TV Garden*. The installation was created by the former artistic director of the Center Young Cheol Lee in cooperation with the landscape architect Sang Su Ahn, and Japanese video artist advisor Keigo Yamamoto (in an advisory role) on the occasion of *Now Jump*, an opening festival of the Center in October 2008. This ensemble comprises the TVs and plants in an enclosed, light space (Fig. 1.16). The viewer may walk around on a path elevated slightly from the level of the garden and observe the *Garden* from all angles. When walking up the stairs of the adjacent balcony, the view on the installation enfolds at the feet of the observer in a rather impressive manner. The plants in Seoul's *TV Garden* are different than those used in other locations. Not only are they planted in the soil (a sort of a 'real' *Garden*), but the selected plants are also partially large dimensional, virtually reaching the ceiling of the gallery. A set of UV lights is responsible for the care of the green plants at night; however, according to the archivist Sang Ae Park, if the plants were to die they would need to be replaced with new ones of the same type.

Remarkably, the set of monitors includes not only the sculpturally relevant casing of CRTs but also a number of new flat screen TVs. The installation has been authorised in the form of a certificate.

It is difficult to determine how many instances and physical realisations of *TV Garden* have been realised and this account is certainly not exhaustive. There are three permanently

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121 According to the wall caption, the installation comprised 60 monitors and 260 plants.

122 The assistant curator at Tate Liverpool, Eleanor Clayton: ‘He gave us a shopping list of all the things we would need, including three people to help him install the work over five days … he specified the type of plants and we basically started Googling to research the best place to get them from.' Laura Davis, "Creating Nam June Paik’s TV Garden and Video Fish at Tate Liverpool" *Liverpool Daily Post*, January 27, 2011, accessed September 29, 2012, http://www.liverpooldailypost.co.uk/liverpool-arts/2011/01/27/creating-nam-june-paik-s-tv-garden-and-video-fish-at-tate-liverpool-92534-28063197/.

123 Eleanor Clayton, in discussion with the author, March 2010.


125 Sang Ae Park (archivist at the Nam June Paik Art Center), in discussion with the author, October 2012.

126 Archive of Nam June Paik Art Center.
registered installations in collections that exist at least to a certain degree in a physical form. (In Düsseldorf and Seoul, *TV Garden* is on permanent display). However, beyond these physical concretisations, various embodiments in the form of even simultaneously existing exhibition copies appear. What the story of *TV Garden* illustrates is the constant appearance and disappearance of a work of art which is being re-executed from instructions, even if unspecific – and adapted to the changing character of a gallery space and technical circumstances. *TV Garden* seems to reveal a process of systematic testing of the conditions for an artwork to still maintain its identity despite obvious material changes. In the system of ever occurring re-enactments of its various materialisations, the ‘becoming’ of the installation seems to create a chain of processes of its assemblage and dismantling, spatial remediation and technical modification. The endless cycle of the repetitions of its interpretations are physically punctuated by institutional acquisitions and loans from those collections in the form of a documentation of sorts, producing a posteriori knowledge about its condition and shape. *TV Garden* seems to materialise every time anew, moving its previous and the subsequent materialisation to the *archival space* of historic and also future possibilities in a manner of repeated displacements, without them having any rigid reference. As I show in part III *Archive and Identity*, in questions concerning the identity of *TV Garden* it is the archive that anticipates its versions. The work is drawn from the archive and, simultaneously, adds to it by way of a recursive contribution to the archival knowledge. The conservation of *TV Garden* is henceforth no longer the return to a past ‘original state’ but the creation of the archive that will anticipate future iterations.

To conclude, *TV Garden* becomes a non-object and object, it exists in a dematerialised form and is being re-made in perpetual reoccurrence of its iterations. What, then, makes this particular work of art a *TV Garden*-work of art? This is a question that must be answered if one wishes to consider the installation as still being that of the same work despite its changes.
Chapter 2.

ON THE THRESHOLD OF MATERIALITIES.
CONCEPTUAL AND MATERIAL ASPECTS
OF MEDIA ART

1.1 How Conceptual is Paik’s Media Art?

The moment Paik declares that TV Garden – just as Video Fish and Buddha TV – can be loaned to a Brazilian exhibition (1996) and arranged following Paik’s remote instruction marks the time when, in retrospect, the artwork acquires its quasi conceptual character. It becomes an artwork based on instruction, sharing features with some of the artworks created in the manner of early conceptual art. Additionally, this association is also imposed by TV Garden’s repetitive de- and re-materialisation, the presence of instructions that convey the concept, a certificate and the involvement of the ‘others’ – collaborators, fabricators and assistants – in its re-execution.

This chapter explores the ontological-historical condition that may establish a link between a number of Paik’s media installations and early conceptual art. Rather than implying that Paik’s media art should be generally reconsidered in these categories, I point to some similarities, but also differences between them and the implications of the lack of concern to preserve artworks’ material embodiment for conservation. In the following, I address the tenets of conceptual art such as the materialisation of an artwork on the basis of a score or instruction and the presence of a certificate. The notion of materiality affected by conceptual art, in effect of which the object commenced to be seen in a binarism of a concept and a condition for its materialisation, is somewhat reflected in TV Garden and other examples of Paik’s installations such as TV Buddha, TV Fish, TV Clock (1963–89) and Moon is the Oldest TV.127 I look into the chronological nearness of Paik’s media and early conceptual art of the 1960s and 70s and subsequently venture into the idea of a delegated labour and Paik’s collaborative practices that resulted in the fabrication of his works from a distance. In doing so, and to illustrate Paik’s attitudes to distributed, delegated labour I refer to the Auteur Theory.

that stems from theories of cinema and expands his digression on filmic associations and installation art as social practice.\(^{128}\)

Aware of the fact that conceptual art is in itself both conceptually and historically heterogeneous – as Peter Osborne suggests, conceptual art ‘runs up against the problem that definition is one of the main things at stake in conceptual art itself’ – I nevertheless assume the impossibility of the isolation of Paik’s media art from the tendencies of conceptual art that must have permeated social art circles in which Paik was active.\(^{129}\) The analysis of these works requires their placement alongside conceptual inclinations, if only focused on the aspects of materiality, as shown in this thesis. So, rather than claiming that some of Paik’s media art is conceptual, I suggest that it participates in the same ontological shift of the work of art in the post Cagean era, reflecting the general change in the concept of art – what art can be – since the 1960s. Responding to the same conditions without being the same, both early conceptual art and some of Paik’s installations create similar conservation questions related to the repeatability of their materialisations that relativise the significance of their physical preservation.

In order to avoid possible risk of overgeneralisation, I make this association specific to my account of installations that may materialise anew with the help of new elements in the course of subsequent exhibitions. Unlike *TV Garden*, *Arche Noah* with its ‘permanent’ elements of the vessel, animals and photographs does not follow this logic. The drawback of such an association between certain media installations and conceptual art lies in its possible misinterpretation. I do not suggest that Paik’s works were conceived in the spirit of the elimination of the art object, or of Joseph Kosuth’s emphasis on art-as-idea.\(^{130}\) Furthermore, Paik’s multimedia artworks never existed as a pure set of instructions under a possible exclusion of their realisation, manifest, for instance, in Laurence Wiener’s *Declaration of Intent* (1968) or Sol LeWitt’s *Sentences on Conceptual Art*.\(^{131}\)

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\(^{129}\) Osborne, *Conceptual Art*, 14.


2.2 Rewriting the Artwork: Scores – Instructions – Certificates

I really see *TV Garden* as a conceptual work. And I don't know that he ever wrote it down, but there's basically an implied score, which is: Place *Global Groove* on multiple monitors in a room; monitors are facing up and there's plants surrounding, and there's sound.¹³²

In this statement, with regard to *TV Garden*, Vitiello pins down what is often maintained in conservation and presentation practice about media installations that tend to be conceived of as conceptual artworks with a clear division between the concept conveyed in a score or instruction and its materialisation. But where can the similarities and divergence of Paik's *TV Garden* and conceptual artwork, indeed, conceptual art, be located?

To explain how the trajectory of *TV Garden* may share some features with artworks created in the manner of early conceptual art, I shall begin from the moment of its execution on the basis of an instruction or a score and proceed to the aspect of a certificate. An instruction and a score is, according to Peter Osborne, a significant contribution of Modernist music to conceptual art.¹³³ Osborne maintains that John Cage, seeking the particular attention for the creation of a score to his musical performances, extended the notion of a score and moved away from the self-sufficiency of a score as a 'musical' entity to other aspects of performance.¹³⁴ Score becomes crucial in George Brecht's event scores, which Osborne associates with a 'generalised, and transposed into the medium of language' instruction.¹³⁵ One of the first forms of conceptual art becomes an instruction piece, manifest in Yoko Ono's *Instructions for Paintings* (Sogetsu Art Center, Tokyo, May 1962).¹³⁶ The variety of versions of Ono's paintings parallels the prolific instability of the many versions of Paik's *TV Garden*. Similarly to Ono's *Instruction Paintings* (AG Gallery New York, July 1961), a form of performance-based painting of which the instructions 'summarise the painting-events in a way that makes them repeatable,' *TV Garden* is often being materialised repeatedly on the basis of an instruction with the help of new TV sets and plants.¹³⁷ Such repetition became common practice, which resulted in, at times, the simultaneous existence of a work in different locations. Although different from the point of view of the involvement of the viewer, both the *Instruction Paintings* and *TV Garden* follow a certain lack of concern to preserve their material embodiment. The idea of repeatability of an instruction as seen in its analogy to musical score will be addressed in the next chapter.

¹³² Vitiello in *Preserving the Immaterial*.
¹³⁴ Ibid.
¹³⁵ Ibid.
¹³⁶ Ibid.
¹³⁷ Ibid.
The role of an instruction in conceptual art is seen in the translation of the ‘concept’ of the artwork into ‘information’.138 Its beginnings reach as far as László Moholy-Nagy’s telephone paintings from 1922, whereby he ordered five paintings in porcelain enamel from a sign factory.139 The concept of the work in the form of information communicated using a modern technological medium establishes a further link between media art and early conceptual art that was manifest in a number of exhibitions such as Art by Telephone (Chicago, 1969) and Software, Information Technology: Its New Meaning for Art (New York, 1970) to name just a couple.140 These decades also witnessed the first exhibitions of audiovisual artworks by Paik, Wolf Vostell, Jean Tinguely and César, and Paik’s first solo show, the seminal Exposition of Music – Electronic Television in Wuppertal, Germany, in 1963. It is not an objective of this thesis to further expand on the relation between the conceptual tendencies in art of the 1960s and 1970s and media art in general. Yet, following this link and given that, for instance, the practices of Fluxus have recently been reconsidered in the light of the genesis of conceptual art, I propose leaving open such consideration for future research.141

For the sake of the analogy between Paik’s media and some tenets of early conceptual art, I briefly venture into the practices of Paik and the conceptual artist Sol LeWitt with regard to the existence of an instruction.142 Paik’s TV Garden may be executed with the help of a new set of plants and TV sets as long as the number of TV sets of at least thirty is maintained.143 If the number increases to over forty, another video channel can be added to Global Groove, namely Oriental Paintings.144 The interpreter of TV Garden thus has a large amount of freedom

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139 Ibid., 29.
140 The broad cultural transformations during the information age, as the art historian Edward Shanken puts it, took place on the basis of these practices as reflections inseparable from each other and from their temporal context. Shanken leans on the Burnham’s System Esthetics (1968) in which he draws a parallel between conceptual art and developments in system theory and computer information processing. In observing the canonisation of the work of artists such as Hans Hacke, he claims that the categorical distinction between art-and-technology and conceptual art were reinforced by institutional mechanisms. Burnheims idea was based on the concept of ‘information technology’ and ‘software’ as undelaying principles of materialised artworks and parallel ‘hardware’. Shanken “Art in the Information Age;” Edward Shanken “The House that Jack Built: Jack Burnham’s Concept of Software’ as a Metaphor for Art,” accessed December 31, 2012, http://www.arts.ucsb.edu/faculty/budgett/classes/art102/SWmeta44art.html, also published in Roy Ascott, ed., Reframing Consciousness: Art and Consciousness in the Post-Biological Era. (Exeter: Intellect, 1999). For Software, see Theodore H. Nelson and Les Levine, “From Software – Information Technology: Its New Meaning for Art; Exhibition at the Jewish Museum, 1970,” in New Media Reader, ed. Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2003), 247–257.
141 For reconsideration of Fluxus in the light of conceptual art, see Osborne, Conceptual Art, 19-20.
142 The parallels between LeWitt’s instructions and new media which, as I argued, Paik’s media anticipated, were drawn by Steve Dietz. Steve Dietz, “Collecting New Media: Just Like Anything Else, Only Different,” in Collecting the New: Museums and Contemporary Art, ed. Bruce Altshuler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 89.
143 Preserving the Immaterial.
144 Preserving the Immaterial.
for the recreation of this piece. Similarly, in LeWitt’s drawings, his assistant Saul Ostrow sees an almost infinite possibility for variation in the distribution of the line made with a pencil.145

Although in a slightly different way, the presence of a certificate in the case of Paik’s TV Garden and that of Wall Drawings indicates another common denominator between Paik’s art and conceptual art.146 Whereas LeWitt authenticates the drawing by means of a certificate in the sense of a final ‘approval’ – which also serves the owner of the work as a document of authentication of a work executed by the others – Paik’s certificate for TV Garden from the collection of the Nam June Paik Art Center entitled ‘Letter of Authenticity’ plays a similar role in a more discrete way.147 While viewing the certificate, I was surprised by the fact that besides its authenticating role, it also entailed a generic diagram showing the distribution of the plants and the monitors in a rectangular frame. It could thus be said that, in the case of TV Garden, the authenticating certificate may entail an instruction of sorts. For the sake of comparison, my research has revealed that the certificates of a number of LeWitt’s wall drawings entail not only the authentication, but also a form of manual for the execution of the work and a diagram.148

Paik’s TV Garden is not the only example of an artwork materialised on the basis of instruction. Similarly, Paik’s TV Fish, TV Clock and, at times, Moon is the Oldest TV have been executed from a (verbal or written) instruction for various exhibitions. Such a ‘conceptual’ status may become subject to change. For instance, TV Buddha, initially conceived in the form of a loosely described work – a Buddha contemplating his own image on a screen placed in front of him – became bound to its material realisation in the collection of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam due to the decision made by the artist’s estate.149 At the moment the museum requested to replace the Buddha for environmental reasons during the construction works at the building (due to the lack of appropriate climate control), the request was refused by the estate that assigned importance to the ‘original’ sculpture. Similarly, during the course of its life, Zen for TV (1963), became a limited number of physical sculptural manifestations. I will discuss these artworks further in chapter 5.

Yet how did an instruction come into being in the case of Paik’s works? There is some ambiguity in relation to this. Although he authored several Fluxus-scores, for his music for instance, Paik was known for his reluctance to write a score or an instruction in

146 For the use of certificates in art practices, see Martha Buskirk, “Certifiable,” in In Deed: Certificates of Authenticity in Art, eds. Susan Hapgood and Cornelia Lauf (Amsterdam: Roma Publishers, 2011), 98-102.
147 Archive of the Nam June Paik Art Center.
149 Bart Rutten (curator Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam), in discussion with the author, November 2012.
the conventional sense.\textsuperscript{150} In this the curator Susanne Neuburger saw the reason why his performances were never re-staged: ‘Paik often varied his own work and frequently permitted variation to them, … his works did not have scores.’\textsuperscript{151} Contrary to this assumption, his unrealised project \textit{Symphony for 20 Rooms} (1961) is known solely in the form of a score-like diagram.\textsuperscript{152} Yet in the majority of his installations following the logic of rematerialisation based on instruction, the written instruction was produced in retrospect, existing initially only in a verbal form. This distinguishes Paik from practices of conceptual artists such as LeWitt, whose instructions, in the case of \textit{Wall Drawings} (1967–2007), have a certain autonomous character. Instead, Paik’s instructions are strictly pragmatic, bound with the materialisation of a work and not formulated as a conceptual act. Furthermore, Paik’s verbal instructions had to be reformulated in the written form. This \textit{act of rewriting} of an artwork, I suggest, was performed by collaborators and museum personnel in the course of what de Tilly proposes to name ‘socialisation’ of the work.\textsuperscript{153} The first phase of such reformulation takes place at the stage of an artwork’s execution by the artist’s assistants and collaborators (either when the artist is alive or posthumously); the second might be associated with the activity of a conservator at the stage of its musealisation. In engaging with multimedia artworks and, more precisely, in their documentation, the conservation of multimedia works of art is constantly involved in formulating and reformulation instructions for future reinstallations. Whereas the reformulated instruction in the case of a collaborator or an assistant takes place ‘first hand’ based on his memory, tacit knowledge and experience, such reformulation linked with the activity of a conservator is of necessity of a ‘second-hand’ nature. This reformulation takes place on the basis of the archive that ‘contains’ the information, and, which, when reformulated, re-enters the archive to later be used again for subsequent reformulations. Thus what becomes an archive is precisely where the score and instruction, and where the records of the previous performances are. This information then gives guidance for future realisations, together with the artists’ concept, tacit knowledge and memory of all persons involved.


\textsuperscript{152} For the diagram, see Wulf Herzogenrath ed., \textit{Nam June Paik: Fluxus/Video} (Bremen: Kunsthalle Bremen, 1999), 33.

\textsuperscript{153} Following Noël de Tilly, socialisation is the process that an artwork accomplishes during its exhibition, distribution and preservation. The socialisation, according to Noël de Tilly, who quotes the French scholar Jean-Marc Poinsot, is ensured by work’s sanctioning narratives (\textit{recits autorises}), meaning the statements accompanying it. Noël de Tilly, “Scripting Artworks,” 12.
A number of Paik’s quasi-instructions exist on diverse pieces of paper, and restaurant and café napkins, such as the drawing he created for *Brandenburger Tor* and *Zen for TV* (Fig. 2.1). These instructions were mostly very arbitrary and the realisation of the work required a highly developed knowledge of and expertise in the production processes of his works and habits. Paik was obviously convinced otherwise. His notes for *Zen for TV* (version 4/12) from the Silverman Fluxus Collection written in a characteristic, quasi-unreadable style and illustrating steps in the manipulation of the vertical deflection of a CRT tube suggest that the work may be redone easily:

4/12 can be done – redone – in any new TV set. … [unreadable] as follows. Cut off vertical deflection unit and turn TV set 90 degree, dial on the bottom. There are two ways to cut off vertical unit 1. Take off vertical output tube (jump the heater pins) OR 2. Keep all tubes and buy a similar deflection coil and connect the original deflection line to the new coil and waste the power there. 3. Anyway … [works?] [unreadable] PAIK.154

Here, the instruction ensures the prevention of possible future inactivity of the manipulated TV set, once it becomes obsolete. It can also be said that it entails the concept of the work translated into the technological operability.

A particular form of instruction produced in the course of the lives of artworks was that created by the fabricator or collaborator of the artist. As the example of *TV Clock Instructions* from the archive of Santa Barbara Museum of Art demonstrates, the detailed description of technical parameters and suggestion for installation are up to the present day a valuable resource for the re-installation of Paik’s work (Fig. 2.2).155 Solway’s archive reveals a number of records and a hand-made book entitled *Installation Bible* that provides instructions for executions of works fabricated by Paik’s collaborators in Cincinnati (Fig. 2.3).156 Additionally, it is interesting to look at the form of certificate that may serve as an instruction for further maintenance of Paik’s works. In the 1990s, preoccupied by the difficulties that some collectors signalised in relation to the playback equipment in Paik’s installations, Solway designed a certificate that authorised the modification of his work in the future. I will return to this in section 5.5.

One last aspect to address is the changeable character of the instruction itself. Paik’s mentor Cage demonstrates, for instance, how the instruction in the form of a score for *4’33”* (1952) may change during the life of an artwork using a different form of notation and having

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155 No date; the instruction was prepared presumably by Patsfall.

156 The ‘Bible’ refers to the travelling exhibition *Electronic Superhighway*. Archive of Carl Solway, Cincinnati.
an impact on its various interpretations. There is, in this sense, a double progress in the changeability of works based on instruction: the instruction renders the work changeable, and the work may trigger the changeability of the very instruction.

In sum, the idea of an instruction entails the potential of various interpretations of the artwork that it refers to. Therefore, rather than affixing the work to a certain material realisation, there is the potential for an artwork to change. It is, in other words, an a priori indication of its changeable character, allowing for exploration of various physical manifestations that have no necessity to strictly resemble one another in response to the sequentiality of their realisations. The idea of an instruction also suggests openness towards the incorporation of chance, contingency and improvisation into the materialised realm of the installations discussed. One may go so far as to say that the TV sets and plants in TV Garden are the only absolute term as is the case with a pencil and a wall support in LeWitt’s drawing. For its future existence, it seems that such a lack of a material, ‘preservable’ artefact divorces the artwork from its gravity. ‘In the future’ – Paik prognosticates – ‘the only artwork that survives will have no gravity at all.’

As I have shown in those of Paik’s artworks discussed, the presence of an instruction directs one’s attention to the separation of the conception of an artwork specified by it from the physical effort of its realisation. This is also linked with the possibility for its execution by the others, resulting in – as I demonstrate in the next section – an extended notion of collaboration.

2.3 From Delegated Labour to Extended Collaboration

In a large number of Paik’s multimedia artworks created especially from the 1980s onwards, the delegated labour and the extended notion of collaboration raises questions in relation to the way his oeuvre is comprehended – as something created using the hands of many contributors rather than one individual. It is also perhaps one of the most fascinating phenomena revealing the capability of delegating his work, creating long-lasting collaborations and establishing a new branch in the possibilities of this social engagement – the fabricator on friendly terms. This delegation of physical labour rests within the concept of Duchampian

158 Vitiello quoting Paik in Preserving the Inmaterial.
159 So, for instance, Camiel van Winkel contends: ‘The conceptual art fantasy has often adopted the guise of a rigorous uncoupling of mental and physical effort, of conception and execution.’ Van Winkel, “The Obsession with a Pure Idea,” 29.
160 For an analysis of authorship and conditions of co-authorship see Paisley Livingstone, Art and Intention: A Philosophical Study (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 62-90; for a critique of the traditional, sovereign authorship of an individual, see Boris Groys, Art Power (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2008), 97.
ready made. Interestingly, it also raises the question of the relation between the labour that
goes into the installation as a physical piece and the labour that designates this installation as
work of art.\footnote{For the matter of art produced by ‘the others,’ yet with emphasis on the artisan – artist relationship, see Michael Petry, \textit{The Art of Not Making: The New Artist/Artisan Relationship} (London: Thames and Hudson, 2011).}

Although it can be said that Paik’s career was characterised by collaborative practices,
I would like to acknowledge the patterns of historical change. Whereas the early stages of his
work resulted in collaborations dictated by the technological complexities of the media, the
later decennia, from the mid 1980s, starting with the establishment of his studios in New
York and Cincinnati, can be characterised as the zenith of his collaborations. In those terms,
\textit{TV Garden}’s first materialisation as \textit{TV Sea} at the Bonino Gallery in New York was executed
by Paik himself, and was only later re-installed entirely by his collaborators and assistants.
It is true, however, that the video \textit{Global Groove}, which became a component of \textit{TV Garden}
emerged from the collaboration at the TV lab at WNET in New York. \textit{Arche Noah}, as I
suggested, was assembled entirely by Saueracker, and it was Saueracker who was involved in
its later reinstallations.

Discussing Paik’s production process, a distinction might be drawn between the
function of a collaborator and fabricator, whereas the former would impact the whole process
of the conception and the realisation of the work, the latter would solely impact its physical
manifestation. The term ‘collaborator’ has often been used in relation to his mentor Cage;
notwithstanding the mutual influence they had on each other in the 1950s, this relationship
should not be classified in the terms of the collective realisation of an idea. In Paik’s case
it is in fact difficult to determine the rigid borderlines among the many individuals who
assisted him in his creative process, which, alternately, influenced his thinking and assisted
him with the physical work. It is certain that a number of his closest collaborators such as
Paul Garrin, Mark Patfall, Jochen Saueracker and Carl Solway (gallery owner), but just as
likely Glenn Downing, Jon Huffman, Blair Truman, Vitiello and Paik’s wife Shigeko Kubota
were also engaged in generating new ideas.\footnote{For a list of Paik’s collaborators, assistants and technicians see Appendix.} After Paik’s death, some of them would become
the executors of his works providing their knowledge as ‘living memories’ of Paik’s activity,
authorising his works in numerous re-installations in diverse private and institutional
collections, and greatly influencing their identity. Paik’s collaborators became ambassadors
of the unwritten instructions, the tacit knowledge of the immaterial sphere of the archive.
They also challenged conservation with the uneasy task of tracking down techniques and

In line with the introduced separation of the concept from execution that followed
some of the conceptual tendencies of the 1960s and 70s and due to Paik believing himself
to be a 'techno-idiot,' he delegated the labour and expertise to skilled assistants. In his book *Art Worlds* (2008) American sociologist Howard Becker describes the recruitment of adequate collaborators as a process of ‘mobilizing resources’ following Eleanor Lyon’s idea of ‘the pool of resources’ that grows in relation to the demand for it. Furthermore, and related to Paik’s social interactions in terms of art production, Becker extends his definition of art worlds to ‘the network of people whose cooperative activity, organised via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produce(s) the kind of art works that the art world is noted for.’ From the 1960s onwards, Paik recruited his collaborators, fabricators and assistants from his direct and indirect entourage. In Germany it was Günther Schmitz (from 1962) and in Tokyo Shuya Abe (from 1963) who played an important role in early manipulations of the vertical and horizontal deflection (Schmitz) that became the basis for later manipulations of the image using the invention of the video synthesiser (Abe). From 1964, Charlotte Moorman re-introduced Paik to performing arts (after his performances in Germany were classified as ‘destructive art,’ he decided to devote himself to the making of ‘objects’), having a large impact on the pieces performed, among others, *TV Cello, TV Bra* and *Opera Sextronique* (1964–67). In the 1970s, John Godfrey contributed to the assemblage of videos such as *Global Groove* and *Allan’n’Allen’s Complaint* (1982), among others. From 1982, Paul Garrin, a Cooper Union student with a ‘strange talent’ entered Paik’s studio to become an irreplaceable co-creator and co-author of his videos. ‘My collaboration with Paul Garrin is like an improvisation of a four man Jazz ensemble. … The first tenor is a new machine, the first soprano is Paul Garrin.’ In his statements, these musical and performance connotations are relatively frequent and will be discussed shortly. Similarly, Paik compares the production of media art to film making – the fact that Hollywood dominates subsequently the European cinema of Godard and Herzog lies, according to Paik, in the mode of collaborations that are less hieratical and more collaborative in the United States – the invention of Donald Duck was the result of a decision by a committee rather than the individual ‘Mr. Disney.’


166 Nam June Paik, “De-composition in the Media Art,” 18.

167 Ibid., 21.

168 Ibid., 15.
statement discloses the character of his collaborations that recall the social practices reflected in film theory.

Let us, for a moment, look more closely at this filmic association using film theories. The Auteur Theory (French ‘auteur’: author) was influenced by filmmakers such as François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard and associated with the French New Wave and the film review periodical Cahiers du Cinéma (founded in 1951). It was mainly through Andrew Sarris’ publication entitled Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962 that film theory gained broad attention.169 In filmmaking, the model of collaborative effort in which a motion picture is produced (a collaboration of director, screenplay writer, producer, actors) has been replaced by a model emphasising the role of a director. Despite the often industrial process of film creation – which applies to the creation of large dimensional installation art involving multimedia – the person who holds the ‘caméra-stylo’ (camera-pen, a notion by Alexandre Astruc, author of the first film theory in the 1940s) has a distinct voice, a creative vision, determining the character of the film and bearing its unmistakable personal stamp. It is through the body of the director’s work, rather than isolated pieces, that the director’s personality is distinguishable. According to Sarris, the director should have a technical competence and his personal style and his work should evoke internal meaning. By criticising these kinds of (European) hieratic production structures and praising Hollywood, Paik establishes an association with the rather open structures of Hollywood that had ruled before the emphasis on the role of the director came into play. Nevertheless, Paik’s collaborative effort would result in a product unmistakably signed by his characteristic mark, distinct enough to shine though all interference, joint studio labour and collective process. As a further consequence, the idea of authorship as something coming from a single artist and resulting from his isolated labour may be questioned.

How did Paik select his collaborative entourage? Kubota emphasises his extraordinary ability to select the right people for the right job (similarly to ‘the right tool for the right job’).170 According to Kubota, Paik was able to link his newly conceived ideas with their potential realisation using a certain collaborator that demonstrated skills appropriate for the project. For instance, in Paik’s New York studios, his paintings were often executed by Jon Huffman, whereas the metal work, welding and a vast number of robots, were carried out by Glenn Downing (interchangeably with Downing’s own studio in Waco, Texas).171 It is not surprising, as Patsfall assures us, that all of Paik’s installations carry a trace of the handymen’s manners, skills and abilities, and it is just a matter of connoisseurship to be able to recognise them.172 Remarkably, the collaborations, rather then assuming creativity, were thought to conduct the work for the artists from instructions. But what if, as I indicated in

170 Shigeko Kubota (artist, Paik’s widow), in discussion with the author, December 2010.
171 Glenn Downing (Paik’s former collaborator), in discussion with the author, February 2013.
172 Patsfall, discussion.
the previous section, the fabricator himself produced the instruction? In situations of close collaboration, as was the case in Cincinnati, based on trust and mutual reliability, the issues of authorship could have become highly problematic. Enjoying the ‘creative complicity,’ it was Paik himself, who, by repeatedly acknowledging each person involved in the process of the production of his installation, disarmed the situation: ‘What is my role?? This old man is nothing but a cheerleader who brings in fat cheesecakes at midnight and diet soda with double espresso at 3 AM.’ This also follows the line of Camiel van Winkel’s argumentation assigning the conceptual artist the role of a manager and a designer who supervises and controls his production.

In the mid 1980s, Paik developed a special relationship with Mark Patsfall, an artist and print maker in Cincinnati, who soon became his ‘shadow warrior.’ The relationship lasted nearly twenty years and exceeds the common understanding of fabrication, existing somewhere between creative collaboration characteristic of mentors, co-artist and fellows, and technical execution assigned to the fabricators. To explain the phenomenon of this collaboration, I recall the moment when I visited Patsfall’s workshop in December 2010. In the workshop, ‘Paik’ – and evidence of Paik – was almost everywhere. Patsfall’s drawers were filled with mock-ups, props and leftovers from Paik’s works. In one of the studios I became aware of a dominant pyramidal installation assembled from numerous chassis and built-in monitors that occupied the first floor and the basement (Fig. 2.4). I was convinced that I was looking at an installation of Paik’s. To my surprise, Patsfall assured me that he had created the installation and that Chicago’s Museum of Broadcast Communications had commissioned it. When I visited Chicago in April and May 2012 I went to see the work. Certainly, I thought, one could not tell the difference between a Paik and a Patsfall. It appeared to me that the Paik-Patsfall collaboration had far-reaching implications and that the ideas of these two artists merged with each other creating a barely separable amalgamation. Two days after my encounter with Patsfall’s work in his studio, sitting in the car and watching the suburbs

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173 For instance, Tak Akira, a long-term collaborator and assistant of LeWitt, insists that the work of collaborator has creative aspects: ‘We are making art. We are not copying.’ Simone Miller, “‘You Can Take Liberties!’ Material und Idee – Konzepte zeitgenössischer Künstler und ihr Einfluss auf Erhaltungsstrategien” (conference paper, German Restorators Association, Cologne, November 18–19, 2011).


175 Camiel van Winkel, During the Exhibition the Gallery Will Be Closed: Contemporary Art and the Paradoxes of Conceptualism (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2012), 168.

176 The Paik-Patsfall collaboration commenced in 1983–84 with a portfolio including a set of prints that Patsfall was commissioned to create and the sale of which aimed to balance Paik’s debt to Carl Solway for financing one of his satellite projects. Mark Patsfall and Carl Solway, in discussion with the author, December 2010.

177 A number of installations were designed by Patsfall and sent off to Paik for approval or discussed with him during his visits to Cincinnati. For example, the large-dimensional silver car installation 32 Cars for the 20th Century: Play Mozart’s Requiem Quietly created on the occasion of Skulptur Projekte Münster in 1997 was executed entirely by Patsfall. Patsfall recalls that when he painted the cars silver, Paik initially disapproved of the colour. He was able to view the installation only during the opening.
of Cincinnati being slowly engulfed in a blanket of snow, I heard him say ‘... Once Nam June told me these works are so good that it doesn’t matter who made them. It is just about making the technology and art closer to people.’\textsuperscript{178} For me, it was a magical moment. There he was, someone who did Paik’s art and participated in many of his exhibition projects, drew hundreds of mock-ups and installations plans, but who also enjoyed the joyful, silent side of the art world without being exposed to the limelight (Figs. 2.5 and 2.6).

Another striking example of extensive collaboration may be seen in Paik’s relation with his Cincinnati mentor and gallery owner, Carl Solway. Their creative exchange went beyond the conventional artist – gallery owner relationship and brought about, among other things, a true embodiment of Paik’s idea of humanising technology realised in the series of robots. Paik’s first robot was the K456 (1964) portrayed in history as a ‘catastrophe of technology in the twentieth century.’\textsuperscript{179} Despite the robot’s kinetic qualities, political load and entanglement in technological drama, the most well known version of Paik’s robot and perhaps the epitome of video sculpture per se was produced in the series \textit{Family of Robots} (from 1986, Fig. 2.7). Solway recalls that the idea of constructing anthropomorphic shapes from existing elements came to him while he was playing with his children’s wooden building blocks.\textsuperscript{180} The shapes that appeared inspired him to discuss with Paik the possibility of creating robots using antique TV cabinets. These would then be equipped with functioning monitors playing video footage.

The first robots, \textit{Grandmother}, \textit{Grandfather}, \textit{Mother}, \textit{Father} and \textit{Children}, exhibited at Solway’s gallery in Cincinnati in 1986, were soon followed by a large number of robots representing personalities from cultural and political life. Patsfall’s archive reveals innumerable drawings and mock-ups in preparation for these works, the creation of which was mainly left to Patsfall. Not all mock-ups were modified by Paik, and not all were realised. It is very interesting to follow Patsfall’s creation process by means of a closer investigation of the mock-ups. Some of them are drawn meticulously on graph paper; some of them reveal cut-out photographs of wooden cabinets acquired in large numbers especially for this purpose. The templates were moved around and arranged into forms reassembling anthropomorphic shapes, and, depending on the personality that the future robots should represent, a certain attribute was chosen. The video footage for the robots was ordered by Solway by Garrin in New York and responded to the characteristics of the represented personality. Patsfall’s engagement with robots left an unmistakable style in the fabricated sculptures, clearly distinguishable from the works made by other fabricators, such as Glenn Downing in New York and Waco. This

\textsuperscript{178} Patsfall, discussion.
\textsuperscript{180} Solway, discussion.
A further implication of the separation of the artist from the physical labour often required resulted in one of the most interesting phenomena in Paik’s philosophy of collaborations – the emergence of his factory. In Cincinnati, centred around Solway’s gallery, who become his dealer in the 1980s, arose a well-organised institution engaged in the fabrication of Paik’s works. It had a major impact on the development of his career and economic situation in the 1980s and 1990s. ‘Media art is too complex to be controlled by one man’ maintained Paik, consigning the production of his installations to the skilful hands of fabricators organised around and orchestrated by Solway (Figs. 2.8 and 2.9). The factory was located in a historic warehouse in Cincinnati’s West End neighbourhood, in Findley Street. The first floor housed Carl Solway Gallery and its exhibition rooms, the other two a carpentry section that manufactured installations by placing cabinets in supporting metal structures, and a storage place for the equipment. Solway and Patsfall were the main actors, organising the labour and overseeing the production.

The tradition of maintaining a factory as a location for both artistic production and social interaction is relatively recent. Andy Warhol’s factory, originally located in an industrial loft in New York is considered one of the most effective models that arose during the pre-

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181 Downing, discussion.
184 The increasing number of Paik’s works created in the 1980s and 1990s has a strong relationship with the activity of the factory in Cincinnati and the studios in New York. Eunji Kim calculated that in the 1970s, Paik created eighteen videotapes and fifteen video installations, in the 1980s it was 45 video installations and sculptures and in the 1990s the number increased to more than 100. Eunji Kim, Nam June Paik: Videokunst in Museen; Globalisierung und lokale Rezeption (Berlin: Reimer, 2010), 216.
globalisation era in the 1950s. Warhol’s professionally managed studio attracted not only technical fabricators who used to work around the clock – in a factory that never stood still – but also became a stage and dance floor, gallery and living space. It was in the factory where the merging of life and art took place, and where the production was staged in the manner of nineteenth-century manufacturing, serving as a symbolic replacement in the time of the decline of factories in the old industrial centres of the United States. The division of labour took place between (famed) collaborators and fabricators as a staged process of artistic endeavour. Paik’s factory in Cincinnati could only partially be associated with anachronism or nostalgia. Rather, the practical division of labour followed the pragmatism of production. The exchange between the fabricators took place on the technical level and concerned the execution, display and maintenance of elements and parts of Paik’s increasingly larger and more complex installations. Although Paik visited the factory now and then, he was absent during most of the production process, leaving its management and control to the others. The team consisted mostly of artists or craftsmen, but, as opposed to Warhol’s factory, no artistic activities were performed on the premises. Solway’s gallery had a rather commercial character and successfully represented artists such as Vito Acconci, Plessi and Daniel Spoerri. Such an organised studio production, according to the art historian Philip Ursprung, ‘diversifies the image of artistic authorship and thus enlarges the discursive surface of the production,’ becoming ‘a growing social network …’. Reassembling an architect or design studio rather than Warhol’s eccentric theatrical stage, Paik’s factory in Cincinnati might be seen as a forerunner for today’s practices – a place of translation of thinking into doing. The most important implication for the conservation of Paik’s works, however, is not only to understand the factory as a place where objects were produced, but also as a centre of technical expertise and production of knowledge. Among four other studios that Paik maintained in New York, a smaller pendant to the factory was located in his loft in Mercer Street in SoHo – a small media lab of sorts. In addition to a large number of videotapes and records that were stored on the shelves, the space was equipped with video editing and viewing equipment. As Kubota

185 Warhol’s factory was a demarcation of larger cultural changes regarding the role of the artist. For this matter, see Jones, *Machine in the Studio*, 189-267. The shift from traditional art making to art ‘industry,’ which relates to Paik’s practices, was later echoed in Hans Haacke’s argument that, rather than mystifying the artistic production (distribution and consumption of art), we should make use of the term ‘industry.’ Hans Haacke, “Museums, Managers of Consciousness,” in *Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business* (New York: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 1986), 60 quoted in Martina Weinhart, “The Making of... Art.” In *The Making of Art*, eds. Martina Weinhard and Max Hollein (Frankfurt: Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt and Köln: Walther König Verlag), 61.

186 Van Winkel, for instance, speaks in the context of the managerial role of the artist rather than the role of the ‘maker.’ Van Winkel, *During The Exhibition The Gallery Will Be Closed*, 206-2011.

recounts, it was both his home and workspace.\textsuperscript{188} Garrin remembers his lengthy visits to Mercer Street on the occasion of diverse projects that demanded the editing of a vast amount of video footage, which required him ‘living there almost round the clock.’\textsuperscript{189} Although only Paik’s wheelchair, furniture and some pieces of equipment were left after his death, my visit to Paik’s loft in December 2010 bequeathed on me the impression of enormous activity and vigour imprinted on it by the artist.\textsuperscript{190} Lovingly shepherded by his widow, the doors of Paik’s studio, surprisingly did not share the fate of other artefacts that were removed after his death, and revealed drawings in various languages and different alphabets he was acquainted with, as well as a vast number of telephone numbers and notes that witnessed the time of his presence – a truly touching instance of an autographic encounter.

To sum up, in order to understand the various technologies of production, extended collaborations raise the issue of addressing the many contributors to Paik’s works. To engage with Paik’s works that emerged from the time of the activity of his factory in Cincinnati is to explore which working methods and technologies were implemented. Furthermore, the engagement of the former collaborators in the posthumous reinstallations of Paik’s works in museums often provides the conservators with rare data, working methods and attitudes towards an artwork. In this light, and examining more closely Paik’s German collaboration, it is worth revisiting the re-installation and modification of \textit{Arche Noah}. Not only was Saueracker the executor of Paik’s intention at Weisses Haus in Hamburg and at the Fundació Joan Miró Barcelona, but, for the museum personnel, he also was the main source of information pertaining to the reinstallations and subsequent modifications of Paik’s works.\textsuperscript{191} In that sense not only did \textit{Arche Noah} emerge from Saueracker’s hand but it has since also been greatly shaped by him. This apparently optimistic scenario in which the living memory provides invaluable knowledge about his (own) working methods may also have a flip side with regard to the authority exercised by a fabricator or collaborator over the works’ appearance. Similarly, museums consult Jon Huffman, the current curator of the Nam June Paik estate on decisions regarding the shape of Paik’s installations. But how do we know whether their judgements are ‘right’?

\subsection*{2.4 Towards Multimedia Installation as Rematerialisation of a Concept}

In this chapter, departing from Vitiello’s statement that \textit{TV Garden} is a ‘conceptual work’ with an ‘implied score’, I have examined the implication of the presence of an instruction that conveys a concept and the ways in which the artwork may acquire a prolific instability on its

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{188} Kubota, discussion.
\item \textsuperscript{189} Paul Garrin (Paik’s former collaborator), in discussion with the author, May 2012.
\item \textsuperscript{190} A large part of his studio was donated to the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington.
\item \textsuperscript{191} In part III of this thesis, I show that there are multiple resources that contribute to the construction of the artwork’s identity.
\end{enumerate}
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basis. I linked the artwork’s potentiality for various materialisations with certain tenets of the early conceptual art, such as the presence of an instruction with its role in the translation of the ‘concept’ of the artwork into ‘information.’ Furthermore, I explained how Paik’s installations might be ‘approved’ using a form of certificate, which provides a further link between those of Paik’s installations discussed and some conceptual art practices. Rather than generalising this association, I rendered it specific not only to *TV Garden*, but also to further examples of Paik’s multimedia installations, such as *TV Buddha, TV Fish, TV Clock* and *Moon is the Oldest TV*. Moreover, following the binarism of a concept conveyed in a score or instruction and the execution of the artwork on its basis, I examined the ways in which the artwork becomes materialised. Such materialisation, as I indicated, is not a matter of a singular embodiment, but that of the potentially exhaustive number of its iterations. This may evoke a lack of a concern to preserve their material embodiment, and the permission for more freedom in their re-execution. In these terms Paik’s ‘conceptual’ media installations, rather than being an end in themselves, fulfil a conceptual role, whereby their *Wirkung* – as Herzogenrath puts it – prevail over the fetishisation of an object. 192

Observing the way in which Paik delegated his labour, I have ventured into the complexities of Paik’s collaborative practices. Acknowledging their historical diversification, I contended that his works created mainly from the mid 1980s onwards materialise under the premise of the extended notion of collaborations. In effect, Paik’s artworks created in a joined studio labour, collective effort, often in the absence of the artist – as the example of *Arche Noah* shows – carry Paik’s unmistakable character. This has a consequence in tackling the somewhat immersed aspect of their materiality and renders it dependent on a set of collaborative and thus social conditions. The cultural dimensions of such materiality may be linked with the practices of early conceptual art and can be fully understood under the consideration of their social investment, as something conceived, constructed, maintained and revived in the efforts of many of those involved.

The artworks discussed here may become exemplary for a larger number of multimedia installations that rematerialise following a similar logic. In fact, in my professional experience working with multimedia installations, the binarism of the concept and material has a considerable impact on their conservation and presentation in museums. The presence of the former is often understood as a permission to re-execute a work with more freedom, whereas the contention with the latter is an indication of the traditional approach to ‘authentic’ or ‘historical’ matter. My decision to conceptualise certain media art installations while taking into account their historical-ontological nearness to some of the characteristics of conceptual art may have far-reaching implications. Rather than thinking about them as art forms being solely realised according to the condition for installation art – questions of space, viewer and

192 Herzogenrath, discussion. The German word *Wirkung* aptly expresses the issues related to the way in which the object appears and appeals, operates and behaves.
temporality – they may also be approached as works intrinsically based on a concept conveyed in the instruction or score and an execution by the others expressed through the extended notion of collaboration. Despite the role of the artist’s collaborators, this ‘execution by the others’ also imposes a new role on conservation and curation. Whereas the latter appears to enjoy the increasing interpretative freedom in relation to the works’ executions – curatorial decisions regarding the reinstallation of TV Garden draped along the ramp of the Guggenheim Museum for example – the former still remains trapped in the convention of fidelity to the material. Yet, as the philosopher and art historian Hans Ulrich Reck asserts when referring to video installations, ‘conservation is not a later born servant but the present co-author of an authentic work.’ One may agree or disagree with his statement, yet the tendency to push the boundaries in conservation in response of the demands of its artworks becomes, as I have attempted to demonstrate, a necessity. The creative shift in conservation’s engagement with the archive that I put forward in this thesis will resonate with Reck’s assertion.

Chapter 3.

MUSICAL ROOTS OF PAIK’S PERFORMED AND PERFORMATIVE MEDIA

Video installation will become like Opera ... in which only the score will be ueberliefert to the next generation and the video curators in the next and subsequent generations will re-interpretate and install them every time new in their anpassendes Place and the accents of the new incarnation will have the strong personal traits of the conductor, like Karajan’s Neunte or Toscanini’s Dritte.

Nam June Paik194

3.1 Fluxus-Stockhausen-Cage: Paik’s Musical Connections

No other media artist can claim the kind of direct linkage with music and musical performance that Paik has. The full comprehension of his artistic oeuvre as well as singular concepts implemented in one of the great number of multimedia installations that he created may only be envisioned by encompassing his achievements as a composer and musician. The beginnings of Paik’s achievements as a composer and musician can be dated to the early 1950s, and at a later stage, when he becomes ‘le grand expérimentateur’ in the field of New Music, as a follower of John Cage and, subsequently, an active participant of Fluxus in Europe and the United States. His attitudes towards media and the ways he engaged with media and materials were a part of his artistic strategy resulting in the redefinition of art practices. His thinking was shared with other artists of the 1950s and 1960s and concerned performance, new music, avant-garde film and Fluxus. Paik challenged the categories of media and materials in the unconventional way he implemented them to fulfil his emancipatory vision of aesthetics.

In this chapter I explore the way Paik’s musical roots and his connection with Fluxus and New Music influenced the nature of his creative production. I also show how these musical implications challenge the conservation of Paik’s artworks and force conservation to rethink what its ‘object’ is. In order to do so, I venture into a number biographical facts that were influential in shaping the musicological provenance of Paik’s media art to subsequently have impact on the creation of their identity. To approach the question of an artwork’s identity,

from the perspective of a conservator I look into different forms of their materialisations. The burning question here is: What exactly is being ‘conserved’? Is it the authentic object, the possibility of experience or, rather, the leftover of a passed event? By examining the theories of musical performance I question what it means in media installations to be ‘unique’ or ‘authentic.’ The different variants of materialisations of Paik’s works and their two-stage character leads us to rethink the way in which his media may be conceptualised as forms of unfixed and non-predetermined materiality. In the following, I demonstrate that Umberto Eco’s theory of Open Work offers an alternative way to analyse Paik’s media and might also apply to larger numbers of artworks in media collections. In this chapter, the previous discussion on the concept and the potential for an unexhausted number of its materialisation is continued on the basis of Eco’s proposition with regard to the ‘incompleteness’ of artworks. Let us first look at the roots of Paik’s musical background.

During the early stages of his education, Paik devoted himself to the study of music, which should have resulted in a career as a classical pianist, but did not due to the his family’s disapproval. He moved from Korea to Hong Kong and then Japan where he studied aesthetics, music and art history, eventually writing his museological thesis on musician and painter Arnold Schönberg at the University of Tokyo. At this time, Paik was one of the first East Asians to appreciate the music of Schönberg, which, in turn, paid off in his ability to bridge both East and West in his thinking. Remarkably, Paik’s interests were already directed towards vivid engagement with new ways of musical expression – Schönberg is considered to be one of the most influential composers of the twentieth century and the inventor of the twelve-tone-scale that had been used by a number of composers of New Music and that contributed to the emergence of Serial Music. To please his family, Paik began attending doctoral seminars and planned to write his dissertation on Anton Webern, which he abandoned shortly thereafter. As a centre of contemporary music, he found Germany, in 1957, particularly inviting. In Freiburg, where he would remain for the next two years, he chose Wolfgang Fortner as his teacher. Fortner advised Paik to work in the electronic studio of the West German radio station WDR in Cologne, an important centre for contemporary music and which attracted composers such as Stockhausen, Mauricio Kagel

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195 Paik had remarkably good teachers of modern Korean music: Kim Sun-Nam, Shin Jae-duk and Yi-Ken-u. Four musical pieces that he wrote in his teens – and which became a signal heralding his carrier as an artist – were lost during the Korean War. Yongwoo Lee, “Information e comunicazione,” in Nam June Paik: Lo sciamano del video (Milano: Editioni Gabriele Mazzotta, 1994).

196 The fact that Paik left Korea during the Korean war (the country was ruled by the colonial power of Japan until the end of World War in 1945 and was struck by the outbreak of the Korean war in 1950) proves a difficult relationship with his home country, interrupted by his first satellite television show Good Morning Mr. Orwell some 34 years later. At that time, he was known only to a few of his compatriots. Jieun Rhee, “Reconstructing the Korean Body: Nam June Paik as Specular Border,” Oriental Art Vol. 48, No 4 (2002): 47-50.

197 Yongwoo Lee, “Information e comunicazione,” 70.
and György Ligeti. Paik’s encounter with Cage and Stockhausen took place in 1957 and 1958, respectively, during the International Summer School Courses for New Music in Darmstadt, where he also learned of the latest interdisciplinary advances in music.198 Cage’s music and his philosophy based on Zen Buddhism influenced Paik in various ways.199 Ironically, it was Cage – an American composer with Oriental attitudes in thinking – that brought Paik with his Occidental perspective closer to his cultural inheritance (the University of Tokyo was oriented towards an admiration for Western music). Cage’s major achievement in the field of music was abandoning the borderlines between the sounds made by traditional instruments and noises that were produced as the result of a musical performance. He argued that once we pay attention to the noise that is surrounding us, it becomes something else, something fascinating. Cage incorporated the central idea of Buddhist philosophy – the sanctity of pure nothing and emptiness – into his work and postulated the freedom of development of a composition.200 His scores were merely proposals rather than a strict set of instructions, allowing chance, contingency and indeterminacy to enter the realm of musical work. The acknowledgment of silence comes from the tradition of the Futurism and the publication L’arte dei rumori by Luigi Russolo (1913), which not only influenced Cage, but also had a broader impact on all Fluxus artists.201 Silence, with its quality of duration, as an equivalent for sound, had a major impact beyond the word of music – it largely influenced the visual artists of the coming decade and had exceptional significance for Paik.

Hommage à John Cage (1959), a composition for audiotape and piano, during which Paik irritated and shocked spectators by smashing eggs and destroying the piano, gave rise to the ‘destruction pieces’ and lent him the title of ‘destruction artist.’202 His later ‘action music’ combined performance with musical elements and rapid actions superseded by very slow movements. This, as Edith Decker-Phillips phrased it, ‘rigid expressivity’ existed only

199 Paik acknowledges his debt to Cage claiming that he left Germany to come the US only because of Cage. Furthermore, he used to refer to the time before his encounter with the avant-garde composer as ‘BC’ – ‘Before Cage.’ Holly Rogers, Sounding the Gallery: Video and the Rise of Art-Music (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 8.
200 For the philosophical relation of Cage to Zen Buddhism, see Kay Larson, Where the Heart Beats (New York: Penguin Press, 2012).
202 Ibid., 28. Destruction in art has been known at least from the artistic activities of Gustav Metzger who authored the concept of ”Destructive Art” of which the first demonstration took place in 1960. Great Britain has become influential in this regard. In 1966, at the Africa Centre in Covent Garden, The Destruction in Art Symposium took place, involving artists such as Stuart Brisley, Barbara Steveni and John Latham. It is possible that Paik was aware of these events. From the conservation point of view, destruction in art has certain counter-productive effects in the sense of creating something that lasts other than a ‘leftover’ of a performance or its documentation.
in singular occurrences; no performance repeated a previous one.\textsuperscript{203} This variability was a precondition for the intensity with which the audience experienced the event.\textsuperscript{204}

It was at the beginning of the 1960s in Cologne in Lintgasse 28, at the studio of Bauermeiser and her partner Stockhausen, that Paik and other intellectuals were associated in their attempt to create the \textit{Gesamtkunstwerk}, a total work of art, combining music, artistic performance and literature.\textsuperscript{205}

With Paik’s musical roots in mind, and his later development, it came as no surprise that his early creative activities in action music, performances and theatrical staging brought him closer to Fluxus artists and, subsequently, to the visual arts.\textsuperscript{206} Fluxus (Lat.: to flow), an international network of artists, composers and designers, centred around George Maciunas and engaged in blending art forms, media and disciplines in the 1960s and 70s, valued simplicity over complexity and ‘do-it-yourself’ aesthetics.\textsuperscript{207} Events with their short scores (Young, Brecht), Fluxus boxes, new music, film, poetry and editions belong to the variety of Fluxus’ creative output. Its origins lay in the concepts of indeterminacy and experimental music explored by Cage in the 1950s. It must be said that the influence of Cage on Paik pertained to Cage’s instrumentalisations – the implementation of prepared pianos, audiotapes and radio receivers as musical instruments, but without acknowledging its sculptural, aesthetic value. Paik’s transformation from music to visual arts came with this acknowledgment: in those instruments he saw not only apparatuses responsible for the production of noise but also objects with visual qualities, so there was something in music that he carried over to visual art. Interestingly, Paik explained his reorientation as a result of his engagement with Stockhausen:

\textit{After twelve Performances of Karlheinz Stockhausen’s \textit{Originale}, I started a new life from November 1961. By starting a new life I mean that I stocked my whole library except those

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{203} Decker-Phillips, \textit{Paik Video}, 29.
\item \textsuperscript{204} Wulf Herzogenrath, \textit{Nam June Paik: Fluxus, Video} (München: Verlag Silke Schreiber, 1983), 10.
\item \textsuperscript{205} For Bauermeister’s recollections of this time, see Mary Bauermeister, \textit{Ich hänge im Triolengitter: Mein Leben mit Karlheinz Stockhausen} (München: Edition Elke Heidenreich; C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 2011), 30. The idea of Gesamtkunstwerk relates to the book \textit{Musik des technischen Zeitalters} by Fred K. Prieberg (1956), in which the author retrieves the nineteenth century idea ascribed to German writer and philosopher K.F.E. Trahndorff (1927) and German composer Richard Wagner (1849) respectively, giving it a technised form, with radio and television in the role of new instruments. Fred K. Prieberg, \textit{Musik des technischen Zeitalters} (Zürich: Atlantis, 1956); Decker-Phillips, \textit{Paik-Video}, 30-31. In the vision of Gesamtkunstwerk shared by artists such as Stefan Wewerka, the sculptor Christo, the Argentinean composer Mauricio Kagel, the writer Hans Helms, Arthus Caspari, the musician Gottfried M Koenig, that embraced not only electronic development in the acoustics but also film, facilitated Paik’s transition to visual electronic art and opened up endless potential for manipulations between the realms.
\item \textsuperscript{206} Jon Hendricks (Fluxus artist and curator), in discussion with the author, December 2010.
\end{itemize}
on TV technique into storage and locked it up. I read and practiced only electronics. In other words, I went back to the Spartan life of pre-collage days … only physics and electronics.  

3.2 From Performing Arts to Performative Objects

Paik's works are entangled, interwoven with one another in a manner of repetitive re-usage of bits and pieces through his entire oeuvre. The way to understand Paik's works and the freedom with which his concepts were re-executed producing a variety of materialisations may be offered by the theories of musical performance, supplemented, in particular cases, by the theory of performativity.

So how did Paik manage to move between performing and visual arts? The culmination of this transition takes place in Wuppertal when Paik, introduced by Bauermeister to Rolf Jährling's Gallery Parnass (Parnassus Gallery), set off to prepare his first solo exhibition. Paik recounted in retrospect: 'I still did not consider myself a visual artist, but I knew there was something to be done in television and nobody else was doing it, so I said why not make it my job?' Initially scheduled as an evening concert, Paik rethought the concept and decided to venture into a new territory, secretly preparing the pianos, monitors and record players in his studio in Bensberg-Refrath. The Exposition of Music – Electronic Television took place from 11 – 20 March 1963, and ‘exposed’ modified television sets as art objects for the first time in this form. The show was divided into two themes, music and television, and exemplified Paik's thinking. The concept of Random Access and prepared pianos were central in one part of the show, whereas in the other twelve television sets were assembled in an apparently arbitrary manner all showing the same program, each having been manipulated differently. It was this exhibition that gave birth to the later Rembrandt Automatic (Rembrandt TV, 1963), a television set turned with the screen to the floor, and Zen for TV, a monitor turned in a ninety-degree angle on its side showing a single vertical line. Although Paik repeated that 'electronic TV is not just an application and visual expansion of electronic music,' at the same time he also believed himself to be a ‘heavy weight composer’ who seeks to renew the

\[\text{208} \quad \text{Manuela Ammer, “In Engineering There is Always the Other – The Other: Nam June Paik’s Television Environment in Exposition of Music. Electronic Television, Galerie Parnass, Wuppertal 1963,” in Nam June Paik: Exposition of Music, Electronic Television, Revisited, ed. Susanne Neuburger (Köln: Walther König Verlag, 2009), 65.} \]

\[\text{209} \quad \text{C. Tomkins, “Video Visionary,” The New Yorker, May 5, 1975 quoted in Ammer, ibid., 74.} \]

\[\text{210} \quad \text{The number twelve refers here to the Imaginary Landscape No.4 by Cage, where twelve pairs of performers each operate one radio and which Paik holds as a possible beginning of media art. Dieter Daniels, “John Cage and Nam June Paik ‘Change Your Mind or Change Your Receiver (Your Receiver is Your Mind),’” in Nam June Paik, eds. Sook-Kyung Lee and Susanne Rennert (London: Tate Publishing, 2010), 107-126.} \]

\[\text{211} \quad \text{According to Decker-Phillips, Rembrandt Automatic arrived defected from his studio to the exhibition. Decker-Phillips, Paik Video, 36.} \]
ontological form of music. He contended: 'My TV is ... a “PHYSICAL MUSIC” ... more (?) than the art or less (?) than the art.'

This musicological link is manifest when considering Paik’s early performances of his own music during concerts with Bauermeister, Stockhausen in 1959–62 and, later, during Fluxus events. Furthermore, his unrealised project *Symphony for 20 Rooms* (1961) – a score visualising a project based on sound installations and involvement of the audience – proves Paik’s bias towards musicological attitudes. These attitudes find expression in the trajectories of his best-known works. Observing the various later materialisations of Paik’s media installations, it seems that the freedom of their re-executions – as works based on an instruction and realisation – parallel the logic of the re-execution of musical performances. Furthermore, Paik’s allusion that video installation will become like an opera dependent on score and curatorial interpretation from the beginning of this chapter seems to fulfil its prophecy. It suffices to leaf through the diverse catalogues of Paik’s exhibitions, depicting objects in multiple occurrences, to witness the various degrees of interpretational freedom with which his works have been re-performed. His artworks, so it seems, perpetually sought new embodiments responding to the curatorial interpretation, gallery space and available resources. As the previously sketched trajectories of *TV Garden* and *Arche Noah* demonstrate and analogically to *Moon is the Oldest TV*, *TV Clock* and *TV Buddha*, following the logic of musical performance, the variations of performances of Paik’s media installation may be oriented around a written or oral instruction conveying a concept. Departing from this, diverse variants of multimedia installations may be produced and re-produced, generating an ever larger pool of possible embodiments. Each enriches the archive of the work and has an impact on its subsequent interpretations. Paik implements and re-uses them, re-choreographing and rethinking the context in which they are shown. This results in both the emergence of different stages of the development of one piece and the ‘modified’ or ‘altered’ repetition of an idea. For this reason his works pose a major problem for art historians resulting in discrepancies of dates of the same installation in various publications.

Both the entangled, interwoven character of Paik’s works and the repetitive re-usage of bits and pieces through his entire oeuvre are well recognisable in his videos. In that

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213 Ibid. Original punctuation.
214 To name only *Hommage à John Cage* (1959), *Etude for Pianoforte* (1960), participation in Stockhausen’s *Originale* (1961), and *One for Violin Solo* (1962).
215 Paik, “Artificial Intelligence vs Artificial Metabolism.”
216 At times, *TV Garden* is dated to 1973, the time of the creation of *Global Groove* – the video played in the installation. Furthermore, and especially in German-language publications, the date it was first exhibited during the documenta 6 in 1977 is being used. Interestingly, neither K21 nor Guggenheim mentions the existence of the other versions in relation to their emergence and the version of the Nam June Paik Art Center (2008) has not been referenced in either collection. Similarly, *TV Clock* appears across archival resources and publication dated to 1963, 1976, 1977, 1981, 1989, 1991, 1963–81. See also section 5.6.
sense, the fragmentation of his older video occurred in the subsequent tapes – images were processed, combined, remixed and fragmented/re-fragmented repeatedly, frequently relying on the principle of contingency and chance.\(^{217}\) The old and new material that was ‘freshly’ at hand was subject to new variations, which reflected Paik’s understanding of time or, as Herzogenrath stresses, its ‘visualisation.’\(^{218}\) Paik expressed his disapproval of repetition in musical performances, claiming that – drawn from his own practice as a pianist – it is exactly the repetition that makes a bad (and boring) performance. He explained ‘I have always thought that variability and intensity agreed with each other. Now I know: variability is a necessary consequence of intensity.’\(^{219}\) This kind of ‘variability’ based on the auto-re-appropriation by Paik of his own ideas resulted from his musical background and corresponds with the nature of video as a medium.

Yet there is something else to Paik’s media that deserves acknowledgement, and is the reason for which I will shortly move my argument away from the musical context. The early performances of Paik’s manipulated technological assemblages such as those staged during the Wuppertal show in 1963 acquire a different temporal status that cannot be repeated or re-performed – it is a status of uniqueness. This is somewhat contradicted by subsequent, ongoing acts of repeated occurrences of objects produced in their result. This, I would like to suggest, endows them with a certain type of performativity.\(^{220}\) J.L. Austin distinguishes between constative and performative utterance, assigning the former the function of a description of a state of affairs, and the latter the power to change the state of affairs.\(^{221}\) For an utterance to be ‘performative’ there is a need of ‘doing something’ beyond the pure expression of speech (e.g. the words ‘I do’ in a marriage ceremony as a carrier of legal weight).\(^{222}\) Accordingly, the shift between something that has been performed to something that is being exhibited

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217 This becomes apparent when viewing his early videos and comparing them with other videos of that period. *Surveying the First Decade*, Art Institute of Chicago, Video Data Bank, Electronic Arts Intermix and Bay Area Video Coalition, Vol. 2, program 5 (Chicago, Illinois: Video Data Bank, 1995).

218 Paul Garrin points out that old pieces involving video tapes of other artists, TV broadcasts, various recordings of dance and Paik’s own performances with Charlotte Moorman were re-used and re-mixed in subsequent video productions. Garrin, discussion.


220 Performativity is an interdisciplinary term that has been conceptualised by scholars engaged with philosophy and rhetoric such as J. L. Austin and Jacques Derrida and repurposed in the discussion of gender by Judith Butler. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 5.


222 The philosopher and feminist theorists Judith Butler contends that the understanding of gender as a condition of ‘doing’ something is an act that has been rehearsed much like a script. The actors involved in it make it a reality through repetition and perform it in agreement with their own belief. J. L. Austin “Performative Utterances,” in *Philosophical Papers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 233-52.
may include the shift from performance to performativity.\textsuperscript{223} This transformation, I propose, takes place by assigning the object with a status of an artefact with performative qualities by means of the artist’s declaration (and the use of his authority).\textsuperscript{224} I will return to this shortly in the discussion on the autographic moment. This is also what distinguishes the performance’s props and leftovers from relics, the discussion of which is continued in section 5.3. Thus the objects, regardless of their switched-on or off status, when removed from the performance context, say something about the concluded performance and force conservation to consider them in terms of both an object and a relic endowed with performative qualities.\textsuperscript{225}

3.3 On Uniqueness and Iterations in Paik’s Media Performances

The creative variability of Paik’s concepts can be explained both in his way of understanding time, and in his relation to music. Paik’s reluctance to maintain the authenticity of his works by their exact repetition resulted in a presumption of them being ‘non-unique’ or ‘non-singular.’ Would Paik then, with the exclusion of fraud, have committed a plagiarism of his own works?\textsuperscript{226}

‘Is original though still possible? if so, HOW? If not, WHY?’ he pondered.\textsuperscript{227} What does it actually mean that an artwork is assigned a unique status? On the one hand, Paik’s re-interpretations of his own compositions makes it difficult to talk about uniqueness in common terms. (It is precisely the score/performance that complicates the ‘uniqueness’ associated with the visual art object). Yet, on the other hand, one can encounter difficulties while classifying Paik’s works as non-unique considering that his creation process has been guided by original ideas. In those terms, he shifts away from the uniqueness of objects and towards the originality of the idea in the sense of conceptual art.

\textsuperscript{223} Performative work would thus be different from what David Davies names performed work (or performance-works) and work-performance. David Davies, \textit{Art as Performance} (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 210-235.


\textsuperscript{225} So Cage, for instance, declaring \textit{4’33”} a performance, transforms what a piece of music is and what it means to listen. It declares every sound that occurs to be music, to be listened to with attention. Here, the switch from music performance to the performative becomes a method applied by Paik, by the way in which he transforms media performance to performative visual objects.

\textsuperscript{226} Eujin Kim notes that at the time of their acquisition, circa one third of Paik’s artworks that entered museum collections had already been reproduced (54 of 154 objects) and that nowadays every second Paik’s work (76 in total) cannot claim the status of being a unique object. She also calculated that 53 per cent of museums worldwide hold his reproduced works. Kim, \textit{Nam June Paik. Videokunst in Museen}, 64.

\textsuperscript{227} Lee and Rennert, eds., \textit{Nam June Paik} (back cover, no reference).
A solution to this problem might be provided by the theories of musical performance that have been present in the media art discourse for the past decade and are debated particularly in conservation. In his essay, *Authenticity in Art*, the American philosopher Denis Dutton discusses the presentation of art in the example of Western notated music. As a two-stage process, the creation of music diverges from other form of visual, plastic arts such as painting and sculpture. The classical musical work is specified by a score, which entails a set of instructions ‘realized aurally by performers, normally for the pleasure of audiences.’ Performances may differ markedly due to the nature of score, leaving a space for the translation from the written encoded language of the score to the sound of the realisation of the performance. The philosopher of music Stephen Davies identifies different types of interpretation of musical score according to the degree of accuracy with which the performer follows the script. The very idea of performance is thus permissive towards the interpretative freedom ‘consistent with conventions that govern what counts as properly following the score.’ It might be well illustrated by the example of different recordings of the interpretations of Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* by Canadian pianist Glenn Gould in 1955 and 1981. The difference between them is remarkable. The stylistic means of his interpretations changed – the first version was dynamic and energetic, the second deliberate, slower and more contemplative. Both interpretations became an intrinsic part of the history of music.

From the perspective of musical performance, Paik’s installations, while being executed, seem to follow a certain kind of a score – written or unwritten (verbal, drawn from memory) – and seem to embody an endless potential of diverse iterations. The execution of a work’s singular instance is shaped by the people involved – the artist (seldom), and the curators and conservators who draw from and contribute to the archive (see part III).

To illustrate the potential for the diverse iterations of artworks, I will briefly return to *TV Garden*. As shown, its television sets and plants are choreographed freely, at times extending its dimensions to keep up with the architectural challenge of Frank Lloyd Wright’s interior in New York (Guggenheim, 2000) or being shrunk and stacked to fit a small gallery space in Palais des Beaux-Arts in Belgium (1983). The screens are mostly oriented towards the viewer, according to his/her position, and placed on the floor or on pedestals to create a certain spatial experience (K21 Ständehaus, Düsseldorf 2002). The monitors have different shapes, but
usually a cubic form of a CRT monitor (with the exception of Seoul) is prevalent. The plants
are rather dominant, delivered from a local supplier and representing what is locally available
at the given location as ‘office plants.’ Yet, upon closer inspection of each realisation of TV
Garden, the plant arrangement always seems to contain something else – a gesture, position,
dimension or colour – that interrupts its presupposed sameness.234 The viewer either stands
on a platform (Kassel, Düsseldorf, Seoul), or observes the installation from the floor level
(New York, Liverpool). The space is mostly dark, but sometimes illuminated by exhibition
lights. The changeability of TV Garden appears, as in the case of a musical performance, to be
virtually infinite.235

Yet how can one, in that sense, avoid the question of limits? The presence of an
instruction or a score renders the realisations of Paik’s work almost infinitely changeable,
but might just as well impose some kind of a limit so that the work is that work and does not
become another. The archive, I propose, holds an answer to this question setting limits – in a
Foucauldian sense – on what can be said or made (see part III).

3.4 Crossing Goodman’s Distinctions: Duality in Paik’s Multimedia

May the same kind of changeability be assumed in the case of Arche Noah?

As opposed to the exchangeable materials (plants) and technological parts (monitors
and playback equipment) of TV Garden, Arche Noah entails sculptural elements in the
form of the painted vessel, the animals and, earlier on in its trajectory, the banners. These
elements act as sculpturally significant in the sense of a traditional historical or contemporary
sculpture.236 The vessel is nothing other than a sculpture additionally authorised by Paik by
means of a spontaneous painting action. Together with the animals, the vessel assumes a
value of an authentic, historical element that is conventionally ascribed to traditional art
forms.237 Therefore Arche Noah unites the aspects of the ephemeral artwork and the sculptural
object. This also explains the certain uneasiness one may feel in relation to the appearance of

234 Following Derridian reflections on repetition and difference, in her essay “White Walls: Installations,
Absence, Iteration and Difference” (2009), Tina Fiske takes on the aspect of iterability and ‘ethics of
otherness’ as possible models to provide conservation with an alternative view of recreation of installation.
Tina Fiske “White Walls: Installations, Absence, Iteration and Difference,” in Conservation: Principles,
Dilemmas and Uncomfortable Truths, eds. Alison Richmond and Alison Bracker (Oxford: Butterworth-
Heinemann, 2009), 229-240.

235 This association with musical performance has also been advocated by Saueracker, who maintains that
rather than talking about versions, one should take into account various interpretations of a work.
Whereas the quality of such interpretation may be subject to a dispute, the authorship is an uncontested
factor. Saueracker, discussion.

236 The particular recognition of artworks as a product of an artist consecrated by romanticism can be traced
back to the nineteenth century. Muñoz Viñas, Contemporary Theory of Conservation, 3.

237 For a discussion of values, see Alois Riegl, “The Modern Cult of Monuments;” Barbara Appelbaum “Values
analysis, the timeline, and the ideal state,” in Barbara Appelbaum, Conservation Treatment Methodology,
Arche Noah during the exhibition on the premises of the EnBW show in 2009. Why is that exactly? Why do we perceive Arche Noah when deprived of the animal ensemble as somewhat incomplete and perhaps even wrong? This question is more complex than it initially appears. It is highly possible that the reduction of plants or TV sets would not evoke these emotions; TV Garden, as we have seen, is often reinstalled in different constellations. The answer lies, I suggest, in the challenge of understanding and acknowledging the duality in multimedia installations – their nature as performances and as sculptural artworks at times endowed with performative qualities. This is also precisely where I propose to expand on Laurenson’s notion of time-based media installations as art forms existing ‘on the ontological continuum somewhere between performance and sculpture.\textsuperscript{238} A ‘continuum,’ according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is ‘a continuous sequence in which adjacent elements are not perceptibly different from each other, but the extremes are quite distinct.\textsuperscript{239} With reference to Laurenson’s notion of time-based media installations, on the one hand, a continuum may imply that these art forms are homogenous in the way they move fluidly between performance and sculpture in the middle of this spectrum, yet, on the other, that at their extreme they become clearly heterogeneous. How does Laurenson’s highly significant proposition apply to Paik’s media? Although it can be said that Arche Noah as a whole may be discussed in terms of a certain ‘performance’ (in terms of the experience of viewing that can also be attributed to traditional art), there is a lack of any arbitrariness in relation to its components, which remain either performed in a sense of musical performance or are sculptural. Consequently, I propose to argue, Paik’s multimedia installations are heterogeneous entities marked by the duality of conventional objects and performances. Furthermore, their duality leads to diverse approaches in identifying their authenticity. The nominal authenticity, which refers to the empirical facts related to the origins of an art work, applies to sculptural and pictorial elements of the installation; the expressive authenticity concerns the quality of interpretation – the ‘faithfulness to the performer’s own self’ following a set of instructions – and applies to the performed part of an installation.\textsuperscript{240} Apart from the interpretative skills of the performers, the implication of the realisation of a historic musical performance is its historic or new instrumentalisation. As Dutton suggests, a historically authentic performance may involve the employment of historical instruments. In this light, playing Bach on the harpsichord is distinctive, but not necessarily better than playing Bach on piano. In the case of Glenn Gould, the choice of a modern concert grand piano revealed more clearly the interwoven musical voices of Bach’s compositions. Historic authenticity thus carries no guarantee of achieving a fully realised aesthetic potential of the score.\textsuperscript{241} The American musicologist, music historian,

\textsuperscript{238} Laurenson, Authenticity, Change, and Loss.
\textsuperscript{240} Dutton, “Authenticity in Art.”
\textsuperscript{241} Ibid.
and critic Richard Taruskin, for instance, claims that the term of authenticity in musical performance is a romantic, nineteenth century inheritance that arose with the concept of Werktreue (fidelity to the musical work) rendering the Werk the ‘objectified musical work-thing to which fidelity is owed and which arose with the ‘museum ideology.’ Taruskin maintains that ‘a specious veneer of historicism clothes a performance style that is completely of our own time, and is in fact the most modern style around;’ a historical performance using historical hardware is never historical, but this is also precisely what makes it deathless. If one follows this analogy, under certain conditions, the ‘instrumentalisation’ of multimedia installation that involves playback and display apparatus would allow for its different temporal variations (migration, emulation, upgrading) without having to follow historical ‘correctness.’ It also raises a question regarding the ‘instrumentalisation’ of a multimedia work in relation to the temporal embedding of particular technology – an aspect that I will discuss later in this thesis.

The temporal and dual nature of mixed media installations may be further explained by what Nelson Goodman calls autographic and allographic works of art. Goodman draws a line between artworks that are forgeable (autographic) like paintings and unforgeable (allographic) like musical performances. As opposed to paintings, which can be subject to forgery, musical performances may vary in correctness and quality, but each performance is a genuine instance of the work. Autographic arts thus involve works, which even the most exact duplication does not count as genuine. Autographicity results, as Jerrold Levinson puts it, ‘when the sphere of the genuine for a given work is wholly circumscribed by notational correctness and not by physical origin.’ Additionally, Goodman classifies painting as a one-stage work and music as a two-stage work; the one-stage character of a work of art does not determine its autographic or allographic character. Literature, for example, is not autographic though it is one stage, and art print (making) is two-stage and yet autographic.

Although he acknowledges the importance of subtle details in identifying the characteristics of time-based media installations, Laurenson associates their identity as

242 Taruskin associates this with the time when storage in museums became possible. Taruskin, Text and Act, 10.

243 Ibid., 102, 143. It is worth mentioning that Brandi seems to share the scepticism pertaining to the ‘historical’ performances: ‘(...) nothing is more approximate than the way Bach sounds on the present-day church organ.’ Brandi, Theory of Restoration, 63. For a view of an identity of a musical work as a ‘fragment of the past’ and its association with the visual arts, see Howard S. Meltzer, “Constant Change, Constant Identity: Music’s Ontology,” in (Im)permanence: Cultures in/out of Time, eds. Judith Schachter and Stephen Brockmann (Pittsburgh: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 51-58.

244 This might be reconsidered when display equipment plays a significant role in the aesthetic appreciation of the piece – rather than an ‘instrument,’ it becomes an object, a sculpture.

245 Allographic = non-autographic. Goodman, The Languages of Art, 112. The implementation of this terminology to the domain of media conservation is credited to Laurenson. Laurenson, “Authenticity, Change, and Loss.”


247 Levinson criticises Goodman’s classification as ignorant of the historically and contextually bound nature of the non-forgeable arts – music and poetry. Ibid.
generally relying on allographic specifications: "Time-based media works of art are installed events and are like allographic works in that they are created in two phases." Laurensen draws a line between the traditional artworks marked by the hand of the artist and time-based media installations as artworks dependent on performance. Accordingly, and in line with Goodman's argumentation, the necessary condition for the main factor that deems the work allographic would be the irrelevance of a history of production. When looking at TV Garden, however, this proposition becomes complicated. Its specific materialisation at the Guggenheim in 2000 (authorised by Paik and conducted by Hanhardt) acquired not only a historic but also a site-specificity and as such was recognised by the audience, to recall the only previously discussed version presented during Moving Pictures at the Guggenheim that was disapproved of by viewers. Similarly, the TV Garden of K21 assembled by Saueracker is considered as the work that reassembles the artist's initial intention (an environment accessible via platform). So the history of production of a performed allographic multimedia work may well become anchored in time and autographed by performers, just as is the case with Gould's historical musical performances. A similar situation occurs when we look at the presupposed allographicity of architecture in the improbable case that the Chrysler Building, as Kirk Pillow suggests, be rebuilt on the basis of its plans somewhere else. Another aspect worthy of mention is the analysis of the process of creation of two-stage allographic artworks as involving the autographicity of a written instruction.

Let us now apply this allographic/autographic distinction to Arche Noah. If we magnify the assemblage and take a closer look at the installation's heterogeneous components, the ensemble of plants and TV sets is clearly allographic and accompanied by the autographic elements of the vessel, animals and paintings. Upon zooming out and regarding the installation as a whole, we could consider it as an allographic entity involving autographic elements. Reconsidering the one and two-stage character of the work proposed by Goodman, the photograph seems to be characterised by its two-stage nature and is reproducible from a negative. But what if – as was planned at the ZKM – the photograph, rather than from a negative, was reproduced from its already reproduced ‘instance’? Rather than a two-stage autographic work, would it not become a candidate for a genuine instance of a two-stage allographic work?

As a thought experiment against Goodman's proposition, it is interesting to also consider the possibility of a forgery of Arche Noah autographic elements: would this shift their status to props of a performance (replicable as opposed to performative relics), which, in their

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248 Laurensen, “Authenticity, Change, and Loss.”
ambiguity, may or may not be reproduced on a next occasion? Perhaps this is precisely about determining whether an object is a prop or a relic.

This question cannot be considered too far-fetched when we reconsider the case of Canopus. My proposal to replace the hubcap of the damaged installation was hotly debated and eventually rejected by the museum personnel. Even the tiniest possibility of leading to entering the sacred area harbouring the artistic trace – the artist’s mark – was unthinkable to the ethically trained museum conservator. It is interesting, however, to consider the apparent acceptance of the replacement of the technical apparatus. Yet when taking the difficult relationship of trace and authorship of this concept further, an association with what the American philosopher Randall R. Dipert calls the high and low intentionality comes to mind.\(^{251}\) To illustrate his argument, Dipert proposes an example of a composer who includes a clarinet in the orchestra at a time when it is a novelty.\(^{252}\) Once familiarised with it, however, the audience is no longer struck by its novelty. Now, if we were to follow the composer’s low-level intentions, during the subsequent performance we should involve the clarinet. But if we decided on the prevalence of high-level intension, another instrument that evokes feelings of unfamiliarity to the audience would need to be used. A similar example is provided by the music of G.F. Handel, who achieved an effect of tension by using the simultaneous major seconds, which by the mid nineteenth century had become gradually stable and more stringent harmonic clashes were needed.\(^{253}\) Although high and low-level intensions can be pulled apart over time, Dipert believes that following the composer’s high-level intensions is more significant than following the low-level intensions concerned with mere means. This echoes Herzogenrath, as it has been suggested, emphasising the role of Paik’s medium in its \textit{Wirkung}, rather than an end in itself – a fetish, as it were, of a historical instrument.\(^{254}\) With this in mind, and revisiting Canopus in this light, it appears to me that if in its conservation the artist’s high intentions were to be followed, the newness and ‘shininess’ would necessarily be restored. But it happened that Canopus remained bound to its historic appearance not necessarily due to artistic low-level intension, which, if followed, would not include the damage to the hubcap, but merely by the highly valued idea of an authentic autographic object enriched and yet deformed by the experienced past.


\(^{253}\) Davies, \textit{Musical Works and Performances}, 232.

\(^{254}\) Herzogenrath, discussion.
3.5 The Autographic Moment

Nonetheless, in their apparent disparity, both Canopus and Arche Noah have something in common: they share a specific moment with each other. Considering Arche Noah from a historical perspective, the painting that took place on the vessel during Multimediale in 1991 appears to be a certain kind of authorisation of the installation, perhaps also its closure. This ‘autographic moment’ is the moment when the artist fulfils his role as a creator, inscribing his name – eigenhändig – among other forms of calligraphy, on the artwork performed by the others.255 This is a way of drawing attention to the necessity of a moment of determination while saying ‘well, that’s what it is.’ The allographic works with a signature or with autographic marks of sorts may thus be perceived as definitive works, works of a certain completion, rendering their determination less provisional, at least at this particular moment. They are also what merge Paik’s thinking in the realm of new and electronic media informed by his experience of music with the tradition of conventional objects, as a residue of conventional art making using a brush, palette and paint (Figs. 3.1 and 3.2).

Discussing the appearance of a signature on a photograph, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida takes on the autographic gesture as matter of ‘affixing a seal of authenticity’ and rendering it something that bears a signature from the hand of the subject. It becomes a unique event, the ‘capitalization of an irreplaceable fetish in the age of the technical reproducibility to which it simultaneously bears witness.’256 In the same manner, the autographic fixation of a multimedia artwork endows it with a significance of a unique object coming from the hand of an artist. This also brings us to the obvious example of Marcel Duchamp signing the urinal as a mass-produced object (a kind of reproduction without an original) with the signature R. Mutt. Although, unlike Paik, Duchamp’s gesture is clearly reflexive in showing the conditions for a work of art as not intrinsic but to be taken per signature as such, the signed Zen for TV may precisely transfer a TV set not considered as art to an object for aesthetic attention.257 What interests me here, however – and what links us with the discussion on Austin’s notion of performativity – is the declaration per signature that assigns an object performative quality. So, on the one hand, Paik turns an object into a performative one per signature in Duchampian style, and on the other, as I have shown, he turns the performance of the object into a performative object.

255 The German word ‘eigenhändig’ means ‘coming from the hand of an artist.’
257 Interestingly, on the casing of Zen for TV from the Silverman Fluxus Collection at MoMA, one may find Paik’s inscriptions additionally designating the number of ‘edition’: 4/12. Initially conceived as a concept that can be executed anew, it now acquires an autographic status of a historical artefact. It is precisely the signature and inscription that has impact on MoMA’s conservation strategy applied to Zen for TV. During my research in New York in May 2012, I took part in a conservation discussion on the replacement of the tube of Zen for TV with a newer one while retaining the inscribed casing. I discuss Zen for TV in part II.
The autographic moment is intrinsic to a number of Paik's works and can be retraced through his career. In Cincinnati in the 1980s and 1990s, the autographic moment was performed on all newly realised installations; as a final approbation of the work of the fabricators, Paik painted his name on the cabinets, accompanied by Korean signs and symbols. An ultimate instance of the autographic moment is Paik's performance of a score by La Monte Young, which involved the instruction: 'draw a straight line and follow it.' Here, Paik uses his own head dipped in paint to create Zen for Head – a line drawn on the paper placed on the floor, connecting this radical action to Eastern Asian calligraphy (Cologne 1961 – Wiesbaden 1962, Fig. 3.3). In this process, Paik rendered an allographic work autographic and specific to its own mark – his own head. Autographic here, as 'coming from the head,' has a twofold meaning. This 'authorisation' must have surprised Young, who stated in a later interview: 'I always understood it was my piece.'258 The generally open status of works of art in Fluxus created a paradox of answering one composition with another.

The fulfilment of the autographic moment may complicate the question of the replaceability of elements of the installation, as was illustrated in the example of Canopus. Perhaps it is precisely its autographic moment that renders the restoration of a multimedia installation in the traditional sense, the replaceability of its elements, impossible: the hubcap was signed and decorated by Paik with calligraphy and therefore its reconstruction was not approved. This directs the discussion towards the conventional understanding of the art object and authenticity in visual arts – once an object carries authorised traces of artistic genius, it cannot be subject to replacement or change. As has been shown, for Canopus this debate on replacement is concluded. Yet looking at the monitors of Arche Noah carrying drips and splashes of paint resulting from the fulfilment of the autographic moment – the painting action on the vessel – a question arises of whether the inevitable future replacements of the technology, in this case the monitors that will become obsolete, will honour the trace of the autographic moment? Is the avoidance of closure possible?259

3.6 Revisiting Authorship: Multimedia and the Concept of Open Work

Taking the formal aspects of works, the open status that has been propagated by Fluxus artists is clearly determinable in Paik's multimedia compositions and brings about the association with another relevant theory originating from music – Umberto Eco’s Opera Aperta (Open Work,
Musical Roots of Paik’s Performed and Performative Media

first draft 1958, publication 1962, English translation 1989). Corresponding chronologically with the Fluxus movement, *Opera Aperta* discusses the role of subjective interpretations and allows for completion of a work of art by interpreters. The idea of an open work serves here to explain and justify the apparently divergent characteristics of modern and traditional art. In the example of aleatory music performances of the 1950s involving (among Berio and others) Stockhausen’s *Klavierstück XI*, Eco observes an increasing autonomy left to the performer in the manner he chooses to play a work – the interpretation of a work is left to improvised creation at the performer’s own discretion. As opposed to classical music, the composers of new music ‘reject the definitive, concluded message and multiply the formal possibilities of the distribution of their elements.’ These works appeal to the initiative of a performer and hence are incomplete and infinite, prescribing specific repetition along defined coordinates. They are open for completion by a performer who concludes the work, who experiences them on an aesthetic level. The author of such an ‘unfinished’ work would have to pass it on to the performer in the form of a ‘construction kit.’ Echoing the discussion from the previous chapter on the division between the concept and its materialisation (conceptual analogy), both the ‘construction kit,’ and the delegation of the execution of the work to a ‘performer’ are reflected in Paik’s oeuvre and his attitude to the presentation of his works. The former may involve a written or memorised instruction, technical and spatial specification of the installation as in the case of *TV Garden*. During the conference *Preserving the Immaterial* at The Guggenheim Museum in New York in March 2001 (*Session on Reproducible Artworks*), Paik’s collaborator Vitiello recalls the way in which the instructions were claimed:

In 1996, I introduced Nam June to two curators from Brazil, who were asking him to do his first major exhibition in Brazil. He exhibited *TV Garden*, *TV Fish*, and *TV Buddha* and explained to me that these pieces could be done working from a distance—the curators could get their own plants, their own fish, and their own Brazilian Buddha. When I started trying to pin him down on how to construct these pieces, his favourite thing to say was, ‘Use your judgment.’ But there are always both fixed and variable elements in these pieces. With *TV Garden*, he told me that they had to have at least 30 TVs of varying sizes. If they had 30, then the installation had to play *Global Groove*. If they could get 40 TVs, then the installation had to play an additional tape from his studio called *Oriental Paintings*, which I don’t think he had used. In other cases, for example, in New Zealand, it was a different piece. It’s like a score in

262 Eco, *The Open Work*, 1.
263 Ibid., 3.
264 Ibid.
a performance—some things have to be done, but there’s room for improvisation. Often, he allows some of us to be the improvisers, as long as we keep the basic point.265

The ‘construction kit’ may also be created at a later stage when an installation enters a collection and has already been addressed, as was the case with Zen for TV at MoMA. In the case of TV Clock, which became a part of the collection of Santa Barbara Museum of Art in 1991 as one of three 24-monitor versions existing at that time, the kit entitled Instructions for Preparing TV Clock by Nam June Paik (undated, presumably 1999) was prepared afterwards.266 It involves a ‘manual’ on how to actually build the piece from scratch, manipulating the yoke with the highest technical scrutiny in order to achieve the light beam of a condensed image. Although, as one of the archival notes suggests, the ‘philosophy’ is to maintain the equipment in operating condition for as long as possible and as long as ‘there is someone around to fix it’ (usually a collaborator or Paik’s assistant), there is an implicit potential for re-making of the piece, ‘preparing it’ in the sense of the instruction.267 The open character of TV Clock lies precisely in these instructions, which allow for future interpretations of the work regardless of the material authenticity of the equipment acquired with the initial version.268 The detailed instructions also imply that future interpretations of TV Clock may be relinquished to others, to actors who do not necessarily carry the experience of working with Paik first hand, introducing the last possibility for the installation to become one of many instances of the interpretation of its initial idea, the performance of an instruction created in the course of its life – a truly open work.

Furthermore, in regards to the example of Calder’s mobiles and works ‘assuming different spatial dispositions,’ Eco introduces another classification – a work in movement.269 This takes him to the infinite possibility of form expressed by Stéphane Mallarmé’s Livre, a mobile apparatus, a (utopian) book project that should have involved the whole world, but, in fact,
was never finished. Eco’s idea was inspired by the philosopher Luigi Pareyson, to whom he refers:

The work of art ... is a form, namely of movement, that has been concluded; or we can see it as an infinite contained within finiteness ... The work therefore has infinite aspects, which are not just ‘parts’ or fragments of it, because each of them contains the totality of the work, and reveals it according to a given perspective. So the variety of performances is founded both in the complex factor of the performer’s individuality and in that of the work to be performed. ... The infinite points of view of the performers and the infinite aspects of the work interact with each other, come into juxtaposition and clarify each other by a reciprocal process, in such a way that a given point of view is capable of revealing the whole work only if it grasps it in the relevant, highly personalized aspect. Analogously, a single aspect of the work can only reveal the totality of the work in a new light if it is prepared to wait for the right point of view capable of grasping and proposing the work in all its vitality.

Perhaps the most relevant implication of the Open Work for the discourse on media installation – and in accordance with its conceptual character already discussed – is the tendency to see the execution of artworks as divorced from their ultimate definition, and, accordingly, the impossibility of the exhaustion of an artwork by a singular performance. One of the roles of a performance is to explain the artwork, making it an ‘actuality,’ but it presents itself solely as complimentary to any other preceding or following performances. A logical consequence of this is, on the one hand, the paradox of the completeness of an artwork having been performed, and, on the other, its incompleteness in the face of the impossibility of simultaneously offering all the other artistic solutions for its interpretation. Here Eco follows the French philosopher and existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre who maintains that the existent objects (being something or someone) can never be reduced to a given series of manifestations, because each of them is bound to a continuously altering subject. There are multiple Abschattungen (profiles) of an object and each of them may be perceived by different points of view. Given that there is the series of apparitions, there is a sense in which the object is not grasped by definition, a possibility of excess. The definition of an object would be based on an abstraction from these apparitions.

Sartre’s discussion on an infinite number of Abschattungen and the implied multiplicity of subjective perception is relevant to the infinite variability of a work of art and follows the concept of phenomenological imaginative variation by the German philosopher

270 Ibid., 13.
271 Eco, The Open Work, 21.
272 Ibid., 16. Sartre contends that the essence – as a concatenation of appearances and itself an appearance – and existence of a phenomenal being (object, being something or someone) is nothing but a connected series of its manifestations. These manifestations stand in relation to the changing object and are infinite, due to the possibility of an appearance to reappear. Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness: An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology (New York: Citadel Press, 2001), xii.
Edmund Husserl. Phenomenological variation refers to establishing the identity of an object by determining its characteristics through imagining variations up to the point where the object loses its identity. This parallels the question concerning the basis for the identity of a changeable artwork: how within this infinite variability does the artwork maintain its identity as that particular artwork?

If an attempt to adapt the theory of *Open Work* to multimedia installation were to succeed, it could have a number of significant implications for the ontological question from the outset of this thesis – the question of what an artwork is and what constitutes its identity. How is the identity of the artwork affected and maintained by the way in which it, be it *TV Garden* or *TV Clock*, is interpreted by the artist’s collaborator, assistant or technicians who shape its physicality? The open work leaves an extensive field of creative freedom to the collaborator who does more than simply fabricating his works or executing them on the basis of the instructions. This is also reflected in Vitiello’s allusion as to the status of an ‘improviser’ conducting an interpretation of *TV Garden* closely resembling Paik’s concept and somewhat echoes Davies’ idea of the different possibilities of interpretation of a musical script. Paik introduced the ambiguous status of a collaborator as being something more than a fabricator but something less than an artist. Remarkably, the collaborator is both the receiver of the information and the maker.

As I have shown, the openness of the artwork in Eco’s sense manifests itself already at the level of collaboration, yet it is not exhausted by it. *Opera Aperta* also addresses another form of the openness of the artwork – the openness to the receiver. It acknowledges the personal perspective of an addressee of a work of art, who responds to the stimuli from his own cultural background, set of tastes, inclinations and prejudices. The work of art, according to him, may only be aesthetically validated from the perspective of the subjective views of its addressees. ‘It is the viewers who make the pictures’ Duchamp once said and, in line with this, yet more radically, the French literary critic Roland Barthes proclaimed – arguing against traditional literary criticism – the birth of the reader at the cost of the death of the Author

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274 It can be said, however, that Eco fails to specify the degree and the kind of involvement of the spectator’s creativity. For a critical discussion of this, see Gustaf Almenberg, *Notes on Participatory Art: Toward a Manifesto Differentiating it From Open Work, Interactive Art and Relational Art* (Central Milton Keynes: AuthorHouse, 2010), 92-97.

275 It is crucial, however, to understand the *Opera Aperta* in its original context. Its polemics marked conflict with the Italian academic word of the 1960s dominated by Crocean aesthetics. Croce understood the intuition/expression as an unchanging entity that constituted the work of art, whereby art was for him a mental phenomenon communicated directly from the mind of the artist to that of the reader. The material medium of artistic work was for Croce irrelevant; its significance lay in the possibility of the reader to reproduce in him/herself the artist’s original intuition. Robey, “Introduction.”
(Death of the Author 1967). In Barthes’ view, in order to draw meanings from the author’s work, one should not rely on the aspects of an author’s identity related to his/her political or religious views, historical and cultural context or personal attributes. In his often quoted statement, Barthes compares a text to a tissue or fabric of quotations and postulates that the essential meaning of the artwork is fully dependent on the reader, who situates the text in a tissue of discourses and in relation to other texts, shifting the conventional importance of its origins to the importance of its destination in the person of the audience. Likewise, Dutton suggests that careful attention must be paid to the audience’s contribution as a living critical tradition to the context of the performance. In the example of audiences attending opera performances in Milan’s La Scala, he suggests that the particular character of the receivership (and its connoisseurship) renders the spectacle complete, opposing it with a hypothetical case of replacing the audience with tourists.

How does this apply to Paik’s media? In the case of TV Garden the presence of the ramp (in Düsseldorf and Bremen) from which the viewer engages with the ensemble signalises the importance of its role. The viewer is staged on a platform, just as the installation is staged in front of him, with monitors directed to capture his gaze. The very presence of the platform is thus a condition for the possibility of its completion. Yet during the mentioned Exposition of Music – Electronic Television, Paik pushed the role of the viewer even further. He followed the participatory concept that engaged audiences in collective participation in his works, looking to Cage and Stockhausen for its genesis. The Wuppertal exhibition is considered to be a development of the never realised Symphony for 20 Rooms. The diagrams that Paik made in preparation for it reveal that five of the twenty rooms were explicitly marked ‘Audience Participation.’ The props, which included prepared pianos, instruments, whistles, toys and a gramophone with records as well as rooms designed especially for the viewer to experience acoustic and tactile differences in interaction with objects (stones, and pieces of wood and metal), were precursors of the concept of audience engagement in Wuppertal. Reflecting on this show, Paik has described his role as changing from the ‘cook (composer)’ to the ‘Feinkosthändler (delicatessens proprietor),’ which allowed him to ‘combine many senses, blowing, caressing, seeing, treading, walking, running, hearing, striking etc.’ In relation to this, Brecht noticed the lack of distinction between categories related to the optical,

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277 Ibid.

278 Dutton, “Authenticity in Art.”

279 Herzogenrath, Nam June Paik: Fluxus/Video, 32-33.

280 Amer, “In Engineering There is Always the Other -The Other,” 64.

acoustical or other experiences.\textsuperscript{282} As far as the traditional division of roles was concerned, in his writings \textit{Neo-Dada in the United States}, Maciunas rejected the separation of performers from director and producer from the audience propagating the concept of space-time art.\textsuperscript{283} ‘As a step towards more indeterminacy, I wanted to let the audience (or congregation in this sense) act and play by itself’ explained Paik later.\textsuperscript{284} The exhibition brought about Paik’s most significant participatory works of the time, such as \textit{Magnet TV}, \textit{Participation TV}, \textit{Random Access}, \textit{Schallplatten-Schaschlik} and \textit{Kuba} (all 1963) that shifted the role of the audience and changed the way of perception of early media art. Unfortunately, only one of those installations survived in its initial form (\textit{Kuba TV}, collection Rosenkranz), the others are known nowadays either as Paik’s authorised replicas of later years, or ‘exhibition objects’ re-created by Saueracker on diverse occasions.\textsuperscript{285} Although distinct in the sense of authorship, both replicas and exhibition objects pose questions as to the limits of conservability and the ‘unconservable.’\textsuperscript{286}

In sum, in Eco’s \textit{Opera Aperta} the ‘openness’ of artworks, its interpretational plane, appears on both the physical and semiotic level as a condition for possibility of its change. The invitation to participate in an artwork presents the addressee with the possibility of an insertion into the artist’s creation by interpretational means. The openness of an artwork also presupposes the author’s uncertainty and decontrol about the way of its completion, specified only in a number of organised possibilities contained in its script.\textsuperscript{287} Despite its apparent indefiniteness, Eco’s cultural-contextual placement of the interpretation of a work renders it bound to specific temporal and social conditions. The openness of artworks would thus be dependent on the particular temporality in which the artwork is being created, exhibited, conserved and interpreted, but also on the skills of the actors involved in its interpretation (meaning both the technical skill and the skill of the interpretation of the archive). Containing a multiplicity of readings, the artwork becomes necessarily a field of meaning. Yet there is a difference between the reading of an artwork and its interpretation in the form of a re-execution. Although

\textsuperscript{282} Neuburger, “Terrific Exhibit,” 36.
\textsuperscript{283} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{284} Paik, “About the Exposition of the Music.”
\textsuperscript{286} The ‘unconservable’ returns in sections 4.2, 5.7, 7.2, 9.6 of this thesis.
\textsuperscript{287} It is also in line with Paik’s wish for decontrol: ‘I don’t like to have complete control; that would be boring. What I learned from John Cage is to enjoy every second by decontrol.’ Paik quoted in \textit{Permanent Impermanence}.
the former has an impact on the re-execution (the re-execution is dependent on how the conservator reads the work), the re-execution itself results from another plane of the artwork's openness – namely to the various possibilities of its materialisation based on instruction or a score. Conversely, different re-executions may also dictate how an artwork is interpreted. In other words, there is a distinct level of interpretation between the discursive interpretation and the interpretation of the instruction or the archive. The interpretation is linked with the activity of the actors involved in this process – artist's assistants, collaborators, curators and conservators – and relativises the weight of the intentionality of the artist. The interpretative activity of these actors will be linked with his/her creative involvement (already asserted by Reck in section 2.5) with the archive.

In sum, the openness of the artwork may be twofold: it may concern its openness towards multiple interpretations and it may also relate to the work's openness to the physical variations in its iterations. How the interpretation relates to the re-execution can only be answered in terms of addressing particular instances of Paik's works in the following chapters; for example the multiplicity of incarnations of multimedia installations such as TV Garden, Moon is the Oldest TV, Video Fish or TV Clock, to name but a few. These apparently distinct characteristics of the openness of a multimedia artwork intersect with one another at the moment of the artwork's re-execution and, at times, its conservation occasioned by it, when the work materialises and when, on basis of such materialisation, the meaning will be drawn.

3.7 Towards Changeability

In this chapter I have shown that Paik's multimedia installations in their de- and re-materialisation may follow the logic of a musical performance. Through the historical-contextual background, and built on the former discussion between the concept and material, I have strived to bring to light the musicological bias in Paik's creative achievements derived from his early identification as a performing artist rather than a visual one, and his musical education and activities. It is precisely in this transition from music to visual electronics that his conception of media art may be located. In this sense, Paik's identity as a media artist signifies more than a sheer engagement with technological apparatus and implies a mode of conceiving of performances employing and exploiting the possibilities of technology-based media. Whether or not an apparatus may be conceptualised at all in its pure objecthood and media specificity remains intriguing and recalls the modernist attempt of purification of artworks to the function of their essential material conditions.288 It occurs to me, for a redefinition of

Greenberg’s medium specificity, that such a task is impossible for it would strip the artwork to its mere physicality and deprive it of its performed and performative aspects. Thus, taught by Paik’s multimedia installations and with consequences for their conservation, one can conceive of a larger number of media artworks in the broader context of their materiality as a set of temporal and spatial phenomena not reducible to a fixed or predetermined material. Certainly, each work is specific and thus whether this proposition applies must be judged using particular examples. This also serves as an answer to the question about the identity of the conservation object from the outset of this thesis. The cultural dimensions of media materiality can be understood under the consideration of these phenomena together with their social investment, as was shown in the previous chapter. The openness of the artwork signifies both the inclusion of the social in the discursive interpretation and the material re-execution of his works.

The nearness of the various interpretations of multimedia artworks to the means of materialisation of musical performance allowed me to investigate the applicability of the theories of musical performance with regard to their one or two-stage process (performed) and allographic and autographic character. Using comparisons from music and architecture, I have shown that such a nomenclature may fall flat when the compound nature of Paik’s multimedia artworks is concerned. Rather than existing on a continuum, in Paik’s case – and as a novelty in theorising conservation of these media – the distinction between allographic and autographic artworks has to be radicalised. Both sculptural objects and performed artworks, his works seem to challenge classifications used for time-based installations and call for a heuristic approach and case-to-case study. Similarly, if we think of Paik’s allographic works in terms of their instrumentalisation, the usage of historic ‘instruments’ does not guarantee the initial (‘authentic’) experience of an artwork. Consequently, the consideration of the higher intentionality may provide us with a more truthful performance than using historical elements, because, as I demonstrate in part II Time and Changeability, even if embalmed in the barest essentials of historical hardware, the past is always mediated through the means of – and is constructed in – the present.

In sum and in conclusion to part I of this thesis, the artworks discussed may exist in variant forms, at times bypassing the problems of the ‘original’ and introducing new ways of thinking about the ‘authentic.’ The openness of artworks to interpretation may be seen as a condition of possibility for their change. Changeability, as formative to and derivative from the archive will affect the way in which conservation should conceive of them. It is therefore to changeability and time involved in the conservation of ‘open’ works that I now need to turn, before going on to consider the role of the archive in maintaining the identity of Paik’s multimedia.
II. TIME AND CHANGEABILITY
II. TIME AND CHANGEABILITY

In actuality, nothing is ever at rest, since the vibrational universe moves and changes endlessly.
Bliss Cua Lim

Understanding Time Through Change

The association with music as a temporal form of art, the concept of indeterminism propagated in New Music and the openness of artworks to interpretation discussed in part I of this thesis leads to changeability as a phenomenon occurring in connection with time. In this section I will address the changeability of artworks in relation to both the palpable material change of objects resulting from their exhibition, distribution and conservation, and to the intangible idea or concept of a work. The former was subject of debates and challenges in the professional field of conservation regarding the revisited term of authenticity applied to those works. The latter – the concept, as I will argue – undergoes change and modification along with its material manifestations in different instantiations of a work, and it does so precisely due to the very possibility of these manifestations. If the artwork’s potential for change lies in its material and conceptual level simultaneously, this inevitably shifts conservation from an activity of managing solely physical change to a set of processes involving just as much – but without prioritisation of either – identifying, understanding and managing change in the work’s conceptual strata.

Changeability refers to the potentiality of an object or a subject to change. Change depends on the time in which and as which it occurs; it is temporal. In his book Book IV of the Physics series formulated in fourth century B.C., Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) saw time as an aspect of change, a number of changes or movements in respect to before and after. Time became an amount of change initially seen as succession. Although, in subsequent centuries, philosophy found other views on the aspect of time that diverged from the linear or successive – one of them being the subject of this thesis – change and changeability remained closely associated with the phenomenon of time.

In the following I will consider how time relates to changeable objects, and what position conservation may take in the face of the physical and conceptual alteration of artworks. I will explore the reasons behind the little attention paid by conservation to the aspect of time and seek its roots in its history of the formulation of its principles. Conservation, as I will demonstrate, is about time, and it involves ways of understanding time. Time seen

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1 Bliss Cua Lim, Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique (Duke University Press, 2009), 53.
3 The possibility of its dependence on space lies beyond the scope of this thesis.
5 Ibid., 25.
from the perspective of media installations that combine allographic and autographic
elements – fugitive and impermanent materials, reproducibility and multiplicity – will lead to
the rejection of the chronological matrix of conventional temporality expressed in sequential
dimensions. This adduces the necessity to rethink the ‘time of conservation’ in relation to
the conservation of these specific works, but also with broader consequences for multimedia
artworks in general.

The present chapter consists of two main sections: time and changeability. For
reasons of clarity and to better explain my argument, I will invert the succession in the title.
Dictated by the primacy of time as a phenomenon in relation to changeability that occurs in
time, this chapter commences by explaining the notion of changeability and, on this basis,
continues by describing rather complex notions of time. The opening discussion is devoted
to three different occurrences of Paik’s only filmic work – Zen for Film (1962–64). Rather
than tracing its trajectory (as in the case of Arche Noah and TV Garden), I will present the
reader with three encounters with Zen for Film derived from my personal experience while
visiting museum exhibitions. The immediate experience of objects serves as a literary means
to not only draw a distinction from the biographical approach presented in the first part
of this thesis, but also to enable the reader to experience a possibly tighter encounter with
the changeability of a singular artwork. The analysis of different forms of changeability will
be illustrated in the example of Zen for Film and extended to others of Paik’s multimedia
installations that exemplify specific forms of change. Zen for Film as a leading example for
this part of the thesis plays a double role – it specifically addresses questions of changeability
and articulates a particular notion of time.

Accordingly, in the third section of this part of the thesis, the analysis of Zen for
Film will provide an alternative way of thinking about time in media. In seeking different
conceptions of time, I will explain why the traditional reference to the methods of time
measurement and its spatial representations is being confused with the understanding of
time phenomena. I will also explore how artworks, as products of humans and their culture,
may confront us with their own internal, inherent temporality distinct from ‘objective’
cosmological time. The Bergsonian concept of time as duration and its interpretation in the
philosophical project of Gilles Deleuze will offer an alternative theory of time; the theory of
duration will help us in rethinking the temporalities of artworks in ways other than those
of linearity, continuity and permanence that have tended to lie behind the assumptions of
conservation. I will examine the ways in which conservation understands time and search for
reasons for the existence of its paradoxes of ‘reversibility’ and a work’s ‘original’ or ‘singular’
condition. The fixation of flux in conservation’s approach to artworks will be illustrated in the
examples of chronophotographic experiments; I will argue that the captive moment disables
the inherent duration of things and stands for the rendering traditional of otherwise dynamic
works. In sum, conservation will out of necessity become engaged with time, and with the
archive – a destination of different temporalities – discussed in the last part of this thesis. The archive will be of time and of change. It will have a physical and virtual dimension enfolding artworks' changeability – 'collecting' their instantiations with the possibility of their future iterations.
CHAPTER 4.

ZEN FOR FILM

4.1. Zen in Three Episodes

No.1  In a slightly darkened museum room I am standing in front of a white screen that fills a rectangular wall with a proportional cinematic rectangle. The image seems to diffuse towards its edges, its contour soft, its corners slightly curved. The film projector clatters relentlessly transporting a filmstrip through its inward mechanics, pushing its plastic body tooth by tooth through perforations – a rather monotone, yet persistently present mechanical ‘soundtrack.’ The machine is located on a pedestal slightly below my eye level; I feel the warmth it produces. The shutter interrupts the emitted light during the time the film is advanced to the next frame, unnoticeable but somewhat palpable. The projection is almost clear and at first sight static. I am attending the event standing inert, without any expectation of an image appearing – I have experienced the event before. Time lapses; on the screen of my imagination the whiteness delineates Paik’s black silhouette on the white background of this projection, from fifty years ago. In the next take Godard projects his imaginary pictures on the same blank screen. Thinking about the film’s physiology, I am trying to imagine how – in the perceptual process of my brain and on my retina – the image retains, evoking an illusion of the motion rather than an observation of singular frames. Yet nothing happens; I am observing the whiteness. I close my eyes and see a black negative of the projected surface. I am back to vision. People pass by, and in some sense able to register non-verbal cues I register their scepticism. Their shadows move away from the projected image unnoticed, effaced. I keep my view engaged on the whiteness. This contemplation pays out, gradually, when I realise that the whiteness, rather than showing nothing, contains random information – dark traces of different kinds appearing occasionally: smudges, particles, shadows. The eyes – I think – are somewhat trained to overlook this evidence of film’s materiality. It occurs to me that the longer my observation endures, the more I can see, the more that appears on the initially very hygienic projection. On the abstract bright ‘canvas’ of the image vertical smudges emerge: hairs, blurry greyish stains. In staccato, the image darkens and lightens slightly following the mechanic motion of the projector. I am drawn to its physicality, the audio of its mechanical
processes of display, the sober intensity of non-illusive real time, and the way in which it imposes contemplation and requires engaged spectatorship before it reveals itself.

**No.2** A white cubic space right behind the passage from one part of an exhibition to another is enlightened by a perfectly bright rectangular image. I hardly noticed the entrance while passing through noisy displays and being overrun by various impressions of flickering, visual richness. I enter the room; I stand still; I wait. Nothing happens. Beethoven’s *Mondscheinsonate* enters the space from the neighbouring video installation (perhaps *Global Groove*). The image projected in front of me is white, perfectly rectangular, showing regular, sharply-cut edges. It seems to just be there, unaffected by anything happening around it or anyone in the room; a white flag of pristine image. Slowly, somewhere from behind, the unobtrusive humming presence of a digital projector becomes recognisable. As I turn away from the image towards the source of the light, I can see the projector located right below the ceiling in the upper centre of the wall. I sit down on a chair situated beneath the projector. I sit and wait. My eyes hurt from the whiteness. The word ‘hospitality’ appears in my mind. I sense hospitality in the way I was received in this room, on that chair, but I also register the uncanny impression of being in a place ruled by emptiness and hygienic precaution – a hospital. I can hear lively sounds from behind the walls, a world reserved for somewhere or something else, and I am haunted by an unfulfilled wish to hear and see more, which becomes an unbearable disruption.

**No.3** I bend over to view a round film can in a vitrine at an exhibition. The can is slightly open, and concealing a roll of a transparent film stock – barely recognisable. For a while I observe it, studying its dimensions and form, the stains of oxidation on the can’s lid and some traces of tape once applied. The film itself is not particularly visible. I recall an online image depicting a similar can and two transparent boxes with film leaders, apparently a replacement for the loop wound on the reel. It occurs to me, all of a sudden, that there is hardly any difference between this film presented in front of me in a sealed museum vitrine and the virtual version delivered from a server somewhere. Both are distant, both deactivated, both a potentiality rather than an actuality. Still, gazing at the object behind the glass, I attempt to project this film onto the apparatus of my imagination and guess what it contains. What would it reveal if I were able to view it? I imagine the sound accompanying the projection and me inspecting the projecting device in the position enabling me to see the full image and its source at the same time. Yet the film I am looking at is still, somewhat useless, enclosed twofold in the can and in the museum vitrine – a sign of its valuable and exceptional status. I am neither able to view it, nor smell it. It is isolated from me and the surrounding exhibition – still and static, an artefact, or relic, one part of an unknown whole, a stagnated remnant of an unfulfilled spectacle.
The work described – *Zen for Film*, which Paik conceived sometime in 1962 – is one of the most fascinating examples of a Fluxus film. It is a prototypical Fluxus film, comprising originally around 1000 feet of a clear 16mm leader that was projected on a screen. Striped to its barest essentials – the film stock itself – it was an anti-film, which, following Cage’s idea of non-sound-music, revealed nothing other than its own material qualities and the noises of a loop running endlessly through a projector.

I have chosen to describe my impressions from viewing *Zen for Film* in three episodes, matching exactly my three different encounters with this work. The first episode relates to *Zen for Film* (No.1, analogue film loop, film projector) exhibited on the occasion of the show *Bild für Bild – Film und zeitgenössische Kunst* at the Museum Ostwall, Dortmunder U in Dortmund (12 December 2010 – 25 April 2011, Fig. 4.1), the second (No.2, digital video projection, 8 min, loop) – in the exhibition *Nam June Paik: Video Artist, Performance Artist, Composer and Visionary* at Tate Liverpool (17 December 2010 – 13 March 2011, Fig. 4.2), while the third describes *Zen for Film* (No.3, canned film reel) encountered in the exhibition *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860 – 1989* at the Guggenheim Museum, New York (30 January – 19 April 2009, Fig. 4.3). The three forms of *Zen for Film* could not be more different – the first is a filmic projection, the second a digital projection and the third a film reel. Yet they carry the same title and claim to be the same work of art.

*Zen for Film* in Museum Ostwall (No. 1) was loaned from Centre Pompidou and consisted of a filmstrip (a loop) run through a film projector. Resembling closely the early concept of *Zen for Film* from the Fluxhall festival, the artwork exposes the process of collecting traces and aspects of cinematic event as a possibility of experience, which I address thoroughly in the following paragraphs.

The Tate Liverpool variant of *Zen for Film* (No. 2) is an example of a rather controversial instance of physical manipulation, in which the analogue film projection became a digital file beamed on the wall in the frozen condition of a hygienic, empty light rectangle. The wall caption revealed that *Zen for Film* is a single-channel video, black and white, silent, eight minutes in duration. Apparently a curatorial decision, the projection included a digital version of the film that lacked the materiality of filmic spectacle. The indication on a wall label also includes the reference ‘courtesy of the Electronic Art Intermix, EAI, New York.’ EAI, in fact, distributes a digital file of *Zen for Film*; its database caption reveals: ‘Zen for Film, 1962–64, 8 min, b&bw, silent.’ Interestingly, both the EAI and the Tate captions hint at Paik’s description of his film as a ‘clear film, accumulating in time dust and scratches.’ Whereas the EAI description read in an online catalogue might serve as information for educational purposes, the Tate Liverpool installation claims a status of *Zen for Film* and signifies a mutation of the artist’s initial intention contained in the choice of a certain materiality of

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7 Ibid.; and author’s documentation of the Tate show.
display. Clearly, the viewer is not seeing what the description promises, which is nowadays symptomatic for a number of exhibitions that include moving images, where DVD projections substitute film (often in the case of Warhol). So *Zen for Film* became, despite the absence of the film projector, an installation with a finite relation to time – the loop has been transferred through the digital file with the clear determination of duration, or a partial 'documentation' of the work, as it were, a digital palimpsest of one of its screenings. The infinite loop projecting itself endlessly, or a film leader, ceased to exist, lending a different element to the conceptual layer of the work. The progress of collecting traces of its usage – the witness of endless hours of 'analogue' display intrinsic to the initial concept of *Zen for Film* – has been neglected with its digitisation, which reveals traces other than just scratches, dust and chance events – but rather digital forms of decay. Additionally, the transformation into digital video projection has a further implication: the screening becomes ‘silent,’ a radical reinterpretation of the initially rich sound experience dictated by the clattering mechanics of the projector. The cinematic character of this analogue medium, like the experience of duration, has ceased to exist. As I will explain in section 5.5, the noise of the apparatus may gain great importance and be considered as preservable in the form of a recording. Clearly, stripping *Zen for Film* of the audible qualities of its mechanics is a radical gesture.

The film can encasing an empty film leader (No.3) is a remnant of film projections of the 1960s and stems from the Silverman Fluxus Collection at MoMA, New York. Cage recalls that Paik invited his partner, the avant-garde dancer Merce Cunningham, to his studio on Canal Street to watch a 'one hour long imageless film.' It was a deactivated element of the earlier projection, with which time has a simple relation to things that decay. As Jon Hendricks, Fluxus artist and curator of the Lilla and Gilbert Silverman Fluxus Collection, reveals, the Silverman Fluxus Collection holds the only film version of *Zen for Film.* According to Hendricks, it was played only twice and when the work was loaned for external exhibitions it was not allowed to be played due to its brittle and fragile condition. With the approval of the executor of Paik's estate, Ken Hakuta, the work was presented increasingly often in a film can, whereas the projection of a new film leader (a loop) took place on a historical film projector. Hendricks legitimises this by claiming that *Zen for Film*, being an experience rather than an object, is about the reconstruction of an experience, and that the usage of the old leader, which lies safely in the can, is unnecessary for this reconstruction. 

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9 Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection is considered one of the largest and most significant worldwide and was acquired by MoMA in 2008.
10 Hendricks recalls a video version of *Zen for Film* that was created in the past and which he a posteriori classifies as a radical misinterpretation: ‘We did make a video copy of *Zen for Film*, which is against the idea of the piece, I think. It is better to get the film leader projected and recover the experience, exactly the same experience that people had 50 years ago. We have the projector, the sound of the projector; perhaps we do not have the smoke in the room, but we have the clear, beautiful projection.’ Hendricks, discussion.
In the course of my research for this thesis, I also encountered *Zen for Film* in the form of a *multiple* — an object, as the name suggests, that exists as an edition comprising a transparent box with a short strip of a film leader.11 (Fig. 4.4) Was it a replacement for the film run through the projector or was it an object in its own right? I asked myself this up until October 2012 when I was able to hold the filmstrip in my hands.12 The yellowed film was obviously too brittle and fragile to be projected.13 The answer to this and other questions can only be sought by looking more closely in the following sections at the logic behind *Zen for Film* and its emergence in the broader context.

The encounters presented with *Zen for Film* open up the question of what the artwork is in relation to the change it has experienced. This question relates to the artwork’s identity, meaning what is at stake if we face its conservation — an experience, an object, a projection or a relic, or perhaps all of these — simultaneously? Furthermore, it opens up the aspect of the changeability that pushes the limits of what can be understood as still the same object and when it becomes something else. Can a work of art invite a change by its very nature? The different forms of exhibiting *Zen for Film* also raise the question of how curation — as a strategy of presenting the artwork to the viewer — may influence its changeability by the choice of certain technology. These different forms also question how an artwork functions within a certain historical moment when the availability of technology dictates its aesthetic qualities, and, in the same vein, when this technology changes following the unstoppable process of its development. In the course of this chapter, and the following two, I will attempt to answer these questions.

### 4.2 The Event, Object and Process: *Zen for Film* (1962–64)

*Zen for Film* is an example of one of many artworks that share the same fate in contemporary collections and pose striking questions about its status, identity and, just as much, about its material authenticity. But what exactly is *Zen for Film*?

*Zen for Film* was really ‘born’ into the world during the influential six-week Fluxus festival — *Fluxhall* — at Maciunas’ loft on New York’s Canal Street on 8 May, 1964.14 The

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12 Erik Andersch Collection, Nam June Paik Art Center.

13 The degradation processes of a film relates to its composition. Whereas polyester stock is rather stable and only embrittles when exposed to certain atmospheric conditions (ambient light and weather), in the case of nitrate stock, the tri-acetate deterioration include a ‘vinegar syndrome’ (the acetic acid affects the film base) and a colour shift towards red spectrum. For an analytic essay on the characteristics and degradation of a polyester film, see Hanna Szczepanowska and Wayne Wilson, “Permanency of Reprographic Images on Polyester Film,” *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* JAIC 39/3 (2000).

work’s early history may be reconstructed on the basis of photographs, such as the little known photograph taken by Peter Moore during the Fluxhall festival.\textsuperscript{15} It reveals that the first screening of \textit{Zen for Film}, as Bruce Jenkins puts it, barely filled ‘half of a home movie-sized screen that was positioned at the front of the loft space adjacent to an upright piano and a double bass,’\textsuperscript{16} evoking a home-movie atmosphere. Yet the most prominent photograph, which shows Paik facing the screen and casting his shadow on the projection, was taken by Moore during the New Cinema Festival I, Filmmakers’ Cinematheque in New York on 2 November 1965 (Fig. 4.5).\textsuperscript{17}

As an imageless and anti-illusionist work, \textit{Zen for Film} circumvented the traditional technologies of production and employment of actors, camera, montage, script, sets and narrative in a conventional sense. It presented the viewer with an effect of a pure electric light meeting the flatness of the surface on which it was projected and filtered only through a transparent film leader. The image contemplated by the spectator would thus consist of light, but its impression would at first sight be perceived as apparently static whiteness, an image that, in the age of analogue projectors, might well have signified a failure in projection, a rapture of the filmstrip, a non-image. At first glimpse, and partially rightly, \textit{Zen for Film} appears as being far from presenting a viewer with complicated imaginary associations requiring decipherment. Yet in its simplistic, reduced demonstration of pure material qualities, the work demands an immediate and careful apprehension of the relational dynamics of time in which the psychophysical world immerses. What is at stake here are at least three kinds of temporalities: the intrinsic temporality of the projector with its ability to manipulate time by means of the very projection, the temporality of the film leader that is determined by the number of traces gathered during the repetitive circulation (its replacements signifying new sequences of alteration) and, last but not least, the temporality of the viewer perceiving the spectacle. In these entangled temporalities of subject and object, the projection of film becomes a performance, or, in other words, Paik puts the screening of his film on display. While Paik’s film is collecting traces in a rather processual manner, the point is not so much about the object marked by time that results from this procedure, but rather the cinematic performance, which has the character of an event that cannot be experienced in the same form at another time – it has a temporal singularity. As opposed to the traditional cinema of illusion, where the time of the narrative takes primacy over any other temporality, the time in \textit{Zen for Film} – in the vein of materialistic film – becomes tangible.

The audience plays a crucial role in Paik’s spectacle in that it participates in and witnesses the chance process of alteration of the film unfolding each time in a different

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15} For the image of the world premiere of Paik’s \textit{Zen for Film} during Fluxhall, see Jenkins, ibid., 69.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 68.
\end{itemize}
manner. For once it is not involved in the conventional side of cinema, the side of the illusion and narrative (where the material of the film seems to disappear), but rather it stays on the less conventional side of the cinematic event, experiencing the materiality of the process of projection in the immateriality of the process of perception. This is perhaps the moment when the difference between ‘looking’ and ‘seeing’ becomes most discernible. The moment of spectatorship is not determined, making it possible to view the alteration of the loop either in its different stages of advancement or in its continuity, duration – its becoming. While the physicality of *Zen for Film* is being processed by the projector in the play of patterns and transformations, the consequent repetition of their sequence evokes a feeling of boredom. Paik’s film follows Fluxus’ attempt to reach the state of immersion that lies in the repetition, following Cage’s assertion that, despite repetition, there is always change. Furthermore, *Zen for Film* reflects Dick Higgins’ philosophy of *intermedia*, a concept that entails artistic activities between various genres and media. The certain lack of fixity of this work oscillates between materiality and ephemerality, a non-film and film, cinematic event and a sculpture, an ‘object,’ process and an environment, in line with Brecht’s conviction of their interchangeability: ‘every object is an event and every event has an object-like quality.’ This also recalls the discussion from the previous chapter on the performed and sculptural qualities of multimedia.

The ‘Zen’ in the title suggests an involvement with the Zen Buddhist condition, which aims at attaining a profound unification with the world by abandoning one’s own preconceptions of it and being able to perceive things as they manifest themselves in their ‘fullness of being.’ Similar to a number of artists at this time, Paik felt close to Zen aesthetics. Although Paik’s Korean roots may suggest otherwise, the most powerful influence was in Paik’s case indirect. In an interview with Otto Hahn (1992) Paik contended:

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18 This distinction was made by Brecht and has been taken up by Jacques Rancière in the interview by Christian Kobald and Richard Steuer. Rancière claims that the pure gaze perceiving the appearance of the artwork is distinct from the act of seeing that has access to reality. Christian Kobald and Richard Steuer, “Nobody Ever Thought That Art Would be Somewhere Outside the Class Struggle: Interview with Jacques Rancière,” *Spike* 21 (2009): 28-35.

19 This echoes Gilles Deleuze’s argument that ‘repetition opposes re-presentation: the prefix changes its meaning, since in the one case difference is said only in relation to the identical, while in the other it is the univocal which is said of the different’ (*Difference and Repetition*, 1968). Accordingly, if there was no difference in repetition, things would be identical: repetition is opposed to the fixity and identity of representation. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 57.


I am an artist. ... Because I am a friend of John Cage, people tend to see me as a Zen monk. ... I’m not a follower of Zen but I react to Zen in the same way as I react to Johann Sebastian Bach.23

As I argued in section 3.1, Cage, whose spiritual dominance was unequivocal in Paik’s works of the late 1950s and early 1960s, was clear in expressing his attachment to Zen.24 Cage created a method of composition based on works of Zen artists, isolating the element of chance and providing random information based on procedures derived from *I Ching*, the *Classic of Changes*, an ancient Chinese book. As he later moved away from it, he commenced testing methods of indeterminate compositions, fully or partially silent scores, scores based on star maps, following the motto ‘just let the sounds be themselves.’25 One of the most famous Cage’ compositions – 4’33” has precisely these origins, sharing the idea of both Zen aesthetics and indeteterminism with Paik’s *Zen for Film*. I will return to this point shortly.

Although Zen originated in China in the sixth century and only later spread to Korea and Japan, the kind of Zen that reached the artistic circles in America was of Japanese origins.26 It was Daisetz Taitaro Suzuki, Japanese scholar and author of books and essays on Buddhism, Zen and Shin, who was so essential in spreading far Eastern philosophy in the West. He was teaching at Columbia University, among others and his lectures were attended by Cage (1949–51), a catalyst for the later ‘cagean revolution.’ Although it can be said that Paik’s position to Zen is ambivalent,27 Zen Buddhism imprinted its mark on Paik’s oeuvre, exemplified by Suzuki’s withdrawal from pictorial content, the seeing of Nothing as being the real, eternal seeing.28 In an interview with Justin Hoffman (Wiesbaden 22 May, 1989), Paik explained his attitude towards eastern thought for aesthetic reasons. In the case of the ‘Zen’ in *Zen for TV*, for instance, he maintained: ‘The title is an artistic coincidence, you know. It is a beautiful title.’29

*Zen for Film* shares a number of aspects with Zen compositions such as suggesting the inherent nature of an aesthetic object by the simplest possible means, understanding the

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27 Paik once criticised Suzuki arguing that ‘cultural patriotism is more harmful than the political patriotism.’ Rhee, “Reconstructing the Korean Body,” 48.
inner nature of an object – its Buddha nature – before emphasising the essence (an artwork is already a work of natural art before the arrival of the artist on the scene), assigning less importance to the execution of the object since the comprehension of the essence renders the technique useless without it, and – also in line with Fluxus – experimentalism. The conceptual quality of *Zen for Film* reflecting Zen’s simplicity might be found in the emphasis of the nature of the filmic medium and the spectacle – one needs a blank film leader and a projector – and in the delegation of the labour; only in this case, Paik delegates the labour to the projector itself, which produces the tangible traces of its own process. Furthermore, in the early 1960s – the heyday of cinephilia and the beginnings of live electronic broadcast (and the time of the strong influence of the aforementioned Truffaut’s *auteur theory*) – it is only a superficial decontrol that Paik’s blank film evokes; in a more profound dimension *Zen for Film* pushes the perceptive abilities of the spectator to the extreme – what is being watched here is an extended dimension of the cinematic *timescape*, an anti-spectacle proximate with but equally too far from whiteness, an epitome of nothingness. Are we watching a no-thing? Are we not watching some-thing?

*Zen for Film* also known with the subtitle *Fluxfilm No. 1* opened up an entire tradition of Fluxus film experimentations engaged with time, image and the very materiality of the apparatus and its medium.30 I am stating nothing new in saying that – in its enchanted materiality – *Zen for Film* certainly pays homage to Cage’s seminal 4’33” (1952), in which the musician plays nothing for the entire duration of the piece, letting the ambient sounds of the environment do the work (Fig.4.6).31 Its significance lies certainly not only in the novelty of removing the musician’s active involvement, but also in the introduction of the laws of chance, questioning the role of the composer and imposing an agency on the listener. The sheer impossibility of silence in 4’33” resonates in Paik’s blank film in the impossibility of visual nothingness, emptiness, a point zero; it is, namely, as impossible to experience pure silence as to experience a non-image – as something essentially about transparency, a clear frame proves the impossibility of an empty image.32 In his essay *Indeterminacy* (1973), Cage describes a Chinese poetry contest in which the mind is compared to a mirror collecting dust:

30 For instance, in Jackson Mac Low’s *Tree Movie* (1961), a still camera records a tree for an undetermined amount of time, and Higgins explored the possibility of blank film projection that burns down while being displayed. Ina Blom, “Boredom and Oblivion,” in *The Fluxus Reader*, ed. Ken Friedman (Chichester, West Sussex: Academy Editions, 1998), 84. It is also interesting to see how *Zen for Film* resonates in works of other artists such as Christine Kozlov: *No Title (Transparent Film#2)* (1967, transparent film in a can) and much more distant in Joseph Beuys’ *Das Schweigen* (1973) based on Bergman’s canned film. For other works with a focus on nothingness see Swantje Karich, “Ausstellung ‘Nichts:’ Eine Kartoffelen, zwei Kartoffelen” F.A.Z. 183, August 29, 2006.

31 Cage’s notorious 4’33” consists of three ‘tacets’ indicating silence on the part of the performer. During the first performance at Woodstock, New York, on 29 August 1952, the young American pianist, David Tudor, himself a composer of experimental music, divided the piece into three sections marked by the closing and opening of the piano’s lid in intervals of 33”, 2’40”, and 1’20”. For a comparison between *Zen for Film* and 4’33”, see Asselberghs, “Beyond the Appearance of Imagelessness.”

32 Compare with Asselberghs’ discussion on the empty image. Ibid.
‘The Mind is like a mirror, it collects dust. The problem is to remove dust.’ This is continued in another poem that questions: ‘Where is the mirror and where is the dust?’ It is striking that, although Paik underlined his close connection to Cage, Cage himself stresses that it is *Zen for Film* that united and, simultaneously, separated Paik and him. According to Cage, Paik’s *Zen for Film* is his 4’33’, yet Paik’s stillness was produced in image, whereas Cage’s stillness comes from tone.

*Zen for Film* is also – and this is too often overlooked – a tribute to Robert Rauschenberg’s *White Paintings* (1951), which chronologically preceded Cage’s most prominent romance with silence (Fig. 4.7). ‘Offhand, you might say that all three actions are the same. But they are quite different’ stated Cage in reference to Rauschenberg’s, Paik’s and his own work. ‘Nam June Paik’s film which has no images on it, the room is darkened, the film is projected, and what you see is the dust that has collected on the film. I think that’s somewhat similar to the case of Rauschenberg painting, though the focus is more intense’ (Fig. 4.8)

Indeed, in Moore’s photograph taken during the New Cinema Festival I, Paik’s silhouette remains captured as a shadow on the screen of the projection of *Zen for Film*, resembling Rauschenberg’s screens reflecting the slightest of ambient conditions in fleeting impressions. Cage – Rauschenberg’s friend and close collaborator – often admitted to being inspired by Rauschenberg’s eccentricity. In his book entitled *Silence* (1973), Cage noticed: ‘The white paintings were airports of the lights, shadows, and particles, ’ ‘mirrors of the air,’ seeing in them the substrate for the observation of change and infinite visual possibilities. Somewhat naturally ‘Zen,’ the idea for *White Paintings* accords with Rauschenberg’s conviction that ‘a canvas is never empty,’ is mirrored in Cage’s approach to silence, and, subsequently, Paik’s

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33 Cage, *Silence*, 272. I was inspired here by the presentation of Andrew Uroskie during the *Film, vidéo, télévision: autour du cinéma de Nam June Paik*, Colloque international, 21 – 22 June 2012, entitled *Situating Expanded Cinema in Post War Art*, in which he pointed to Cage’s statement with reference to *Zen for Film*.

34 Cage, “ Zum Werk von Nam June Paik.”

35 The *White Paintings* – created using the simple means of a roller and Latex house paint – became open to re-iterations as a piece based on instruction with the possibility of remaking them ‘all white’ on two, three, four, five and six panels. For the instruction, see Yve-Alain Bois et al., *The Anarchy of Silence: John Cage and Experimental Art* (Barcelona: Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 2010), 178.


37 Interestingly, this gesture has led Christopher Eamon to the interpretation of *Zen for Film* as a film about Paik’s movements within the frame. He also claims that the performer is necessary to complete the work, associating Paik’s film with Robert Whiteman’s *Prune Flat* (1965) and Guy Debord’s *Hurlements en Faveur de Sade* (Howls in Favour of Sade, 1952). Christopher Eamon, “An Art of Temporality,” in *Film and Video Art*, ed. Stuart Comer (London: Tate Publishing: 2009), 66-85.

empty film leader.\(^{39}\) Cage maintained that when he first encountered *White Paintings*, he was already thinking about a composition entailing only silence, but it was Rauschenberg’s paintings that triggered him to ‘immediately respond to them’ and finally encouraged the creation of *4’33’*.\(^{40}\) ‘Silence, like music, is non-existent’ he contended; ‘there are always sounds.’\(^{41}\)

There is, however, a deeper level to Paik’s cinematic Zen, and one chronologically more distant. Four decades earlier, Duchamp turned against what he called ‘retinal art,’ an idea that art is intended primarily for the eye, and created a sculpture out of air entitled *50 cc of Paris Air* (1919). It echoed in the beginnings of creations of invisible art, such as Yves Klein’s exhibition of ‘invisible art’ in form of an empty gallery room (1958), air sculptures plans with Jean Tinguely (1958) and, nurturing spatial awareness, plans for *architecture de l’air*.\(^{42}\) Another link is provided by László Moholy-Nagy, who, in his treatise *New Vision* (1928) discusses Kazimir Malevich’s *White on White* (1918) as a projection surface, virtually ignoring the depiction of the square. Moholy-Nagy maintains: ‘Here is to be found the interpretation of Malevich’s last picture – the plain white surface, which constituted an ideal plane for kinetic light and shadow effect, which, originating in the surroundings, would fall upon it. In this way, Malevich’s picture represents a miniature cinema screen.’\(^{43}\)

Despite these many associations and Moore’s famous photograph, Paik’s film is not about whiteness, rather, it is essentially about transparency and non-transparency.\(^{44}\) I will address the loss of transparency, as intrinsically bound to the time in which it occurs, in

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41 Branden, *Random Order*.


44 In Paik’s film the process of projecting the light through a filmstrip is more relevant than the apparent, temporary whiteness appearing on the projected surface. So rather than associating the whiteness with Brian O’Doherty’s idea of a limbo-like gallery in which things to be exhibited must first die, I propose to look at Paik’s projection as being in the state of constant becoming from translucent to opaque, circumventing the unshadowed and clean modernist gallery space. For the idea of a gallery as a limbo-like space, see Brian O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), 15. The idea of subtraction put forward by the French theorist Alain Badiou in his book *The Century* (2005) may be helpful in understanding Paik’s film. Discussing Malevich’s *White on White* (1918), Badiou sees in it the epitome of purification, where the colour has been replaced for the geometrical allusion creating a minimal difference, subtraction of what was already there. Paik, too, shares this in the way he takes away the photograms, subtracts the content of the image and renders it something about deterioration. Alain Badiou, *The Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 55-57.
Furthermore, it should not be left unmentioned that the three artworks – 4′33″, *White Paintings* and *Zen for Film* – all manifest fundamental differences concerning vision (Rauschenberg), sound (Cage) and time (Paik).

Both the Cagean silence and the ‘emptiness’ of Paik’s film projection pose interesting questions related to what exactly there is to be preserved. The presence of a projector (in the majority of the viewed installations *Eiki*) has a rather functional value. We are neither able to capture any certain ‘condition’ of the work, nor reconstruct the contingent trace. There is no ‘object’ of conservation, but rather a set of elements evoking certain effects. The solution can only be sought by looking at the processual qualities of the work.

It is striking to what degree Cage’s description of Rauschenberg’s paintings as projection screens for the ambient noise applies to Paik’s *Zen for Film*, which operates on the same level of pure materiality, refusing to provide its audience with a straightforward and pleasant visual illusion and exposing its own constituents not only as a carrier of the visual message but also as a message in itself. It also renders the effects of time visible and alters the way in which we watch moving images as traditional filmstrips, which – just as *Zen for Film*, less exposed and only somewhat visible – inevitably age, collecting scratches, smudges and dust. Drawn to the imaginary illusion, contemplating the depth of what is seen on the screen or following the cinematic narrative, the ageing of film is being overlooked; it does not exist. It appears as magic in front of us. The accumulation of dust on the film leader also recalls Duchamp’s and Man Ray’s *Dust Breeding (Duchamp’s Large Glass with Dust Notes)*, a photograph of a reverse of *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (also known as *Large Glass*, 1915–23) taken by Duchamp’s close friend and collaborator Man Ray in his studio in Broadway, New York, after Duchamp’s return from Paris in 1920 (Fig. 4.9). In a remarkably beautiful way, Man Ray’s photograph captured the texture of the dust formations that laid atop the glass surface divided by delicate lines of lead wire. After the photograph was taken, Duchamp removed the dust by wiping the surface, leaving only a section of the cones covered, affixing it with diluted cement. What *Zen for Film* and *Dust Breeding* share, despite the obvious ability to accumulate dust – the one as a filmic, the other as a more conventional object – is the emphasis of a process that leads to some contingent end result. Duchamp determines its finitude in a simple gesture of wiping the dust and introducing a stoppage in the process of dust accumulation. This is, simultaneously, concluded by an act of its partial physical ‘conservation,’ whereby the dust layer in its whole extent is fixed only in Man Ray’s photographic image. Paik’s film leader requires a similar determination in deciding how many circulations of the strip through the projector still render the film what it was intended to represent, before the random trace accumulation makes it entirely unreadable as a clear projection. It is also a matter of control left to the operator of the work – perhaps

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a conservator, curator or technician – over the appearance of the projected image. In fact, during my research for this thesis, I was able to experience *Zen for Film* in different stages dictated by various conditions of the filmstrip. For example, during its screening on the occasion of the seminar *Auteur de Zen For Film* in Centre Pompidou in Paris (29 September 2010) the leader was extremely worn out, displaying a large number of particles, smudges and darkish stains, similar to its screening in Nam June Paik Art Center in October 2012. In December 2011, at the Museum Ostwall in Dortmund, Germany, *Zen for Film* was projected in a much ‘younger’ version, revealing a minor number of dust particles and scratches (the artwork was loaned from Centre Pompidou).46 These variations between the different states of the leader might well be seen on platforms such as Youtube, Vimeo or UBUWEB in the form of videos recorded on different occasions.47

Yet *Dust Breeding* and *Zen for Film* share another vital link, namely the apparent potentiality of their iteration. Richard Hamilton reconstructed *Large Glass* according to the instructions from a *Green Box* (1934) for Duchamp’s retrospective at the Tate Gallery in 1966.48 The reconstructions do not share with *Large Glass* the breakage of the glass, which happened to it during its shipment on the occasion of an exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum in New York. In a slightly different way, the iteration of *Zen for Film*s leader become an obvious gesture and an integral part of its maintenance since the process of display would otherwise become impossible due to the worn-out character of the film. It is not to say, however, that these artworks can be replicated. Both the *Large Glass* with its breakage and the traces on *Zen for Film*s leader (in terms of experiencing an event) are unreplicable.

In this analytical inquiry of Paik’s clear filmstrip, I cannot resist including another reflection. If there is nothing to conserve in the sense of an ‘object,’ should we conserve the ‘used’ film strips? Would they then become collectables or rather documents that form an evolving archive of the recording of time and mechanic traces of the projector on the celluloid body of the leader?49 This would accord with the drive to conserve every piece of material evidence of artworks known from contemporary conservation practice.

*White paintings, 4’33”, Dust Breeding* and *Zen for Film* share here not only the contingency of performance and the processual becoming. They also all pose a very similar question, namely the one of an impossibility to capture chance events and arresting the moment as essential for a traditional conservation approach, which I will discuss shortly.

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46 Exhibition *Bild für Bild.*
47 Interestingly, while watching these mostly low-quality recordings taken frequently using a mobile phone camera, it becomes obvious that the attention of the viewer/cameraman is directed to the image rather than to the projector (which is visible on these videos rather sporadically), thus dismissing its role in the aesthetic whole of the work.
48 The work has also been reconstructed by Ulf Linde and Per Olof Ultvedt for Moderna Museet in Stockholm in 1961, and, subsequently, by Linde in 1990-91.
49 Interestingly, however, when it comes to the film roll in the can, Hendricks refers to it as a relic: ‘you can see it and you can imagine what it is.’ Hendricks, discussion.
 Whereas Duchamp seemed to find a solution to this problem before it appeared – in wiping off the dust from the glass with the exception of the cones where it was affixed, the fate of Rauschenberg’s White Paintings, which exists in a number of executions, provokes debates in the professional field. Rauschenberg died in 2008 and, although he practised repainting the canvasses (the series of Black Paintings (1951 – 52) following the white panels, for instance, were modified at least three times, the latest in 1985), the question remains whether they should still be ‘refreshed’ to retain their pristine condition or should display alteration processes – yellowing, darkening, staining and cracking.50 There is a difference in the reading of a tan, stained painting that was initially conceived to be purely white, expressing Rauschenberg’s interest in ‘getting complexity without their revealing much’ and ‘the fact that there was much to see but not much shown.’ Interestingly, during this research, I encountered both repainted and patinated versions of White Paintings. The earlier, according to David White, curator of the Rauschenberg Foundation, accords with the artist’s intention that there was never to be any patina or sense of age.51 The latter reveals a documentary value;52 rather than being an airport for light, the change in time renders the work signed by alteration and patina, an artefact witnessing its own material transformation just as Zen for Film does.

To resume, Zen for Film’s various occurrences – as an object, projection and process – that I related to the various aesthetic, technological and historical aspects in the previous sections, owes much to the dissemination and exhibition procedures triggered by people involved at different stages of the artwork’s carrier. Whereas the care taken for the static film leader and the multiple relates to the strategies of the monitoring the physical alteration of materials (and in this sense is no different from the care taken for traditional artworks), Zen for Film as a projection escapes the common presumptions about it being a ‘conservation object.’ It demonstrates that, when thinking about conservation, we need to take into account the artistic and curatorial decisions that have shaped the work during numerous displays, maintenance and dissemination processes. Curation here may overtake the role of

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51 According to White, most versions of White Paintings, if not all, have undergone such a process of ‘touching up.’ The repainting follows the artist’s exact instructions. Personal correspondence with curatorial staff at the Barbican Art Gallery, April 23, 2013. The White Paintings were exhibited on the occasion of The Bride and the Bachelors: Duchamp with Cage, Cunningham, Rauschenberg and Johns, Barbican Art Gallery, London, 14 February – 9 June 2013.

52 The same could be said considering Piero Manzoni’s Achrome (1960) – a white painting manifesting its materiality through the reduction of the painterly surface to pure whiteness. Manzoni’s intention was to repaint the work on the occasion of its exhibitions, which is contradicted by conservation’s attitude towards the ‘original.’ Hikka Hiop, “The Possibility of Patina in Contemporary Art or, Does the ‘New Art’ Have a Right to Get Old?,” accessed September 5, 2012. http://www.eki.ee/km/place/pdf/kp6_10_hiop.pdf.
preservation of the work in the sense of maintaining its presentation, but it may also radically change the object’s appearance. In turn, the temptation of conservation would be to preserve the historic experience of the work, which, as I showed in the discussion on Taruskin’s critique of authentic historical performance (section 3.4), does not have much to succeed. So in the approximation to the reconstruction of the event from the 1960s, a new leader is always being run through the projector. Obviously, if we were to preserve the leader, we could not run it through the projector. This is precisely the logic behind the decision that resulted in the emergence of *Zen for Film* as a canned film reel. Because the historic projector had not been preserved, *Zen for Film* as a projection becomes an entirely new assemblage of materials every time it is exhibited. In that (physical) sense and also in the sense of the impossibility of the ‘conservation’ of an experience (and a reconstruction of a historical performance), it is unconservable.

In sum, as an object, projection and process, *Zen for Film* confronts us with a complexity that reaches beyond presumptions about the identity of works of art in our collections, and forces us to acknowledge changeability as an intrinsic and irreducible factor constituting what an artwork is.
Chapter 5.  
Changeability and Paik’s Multimedia

*My TV is not always interesting, but not always uninteresting. As nature, which is beautiful, not because it changes beautifully, but because it simply changes.* Nam June Paik

5.1 The Many Forms of Changeability in Paik’s Multimedia Installations

Through the prism of conservation and in the broader context of material studies, if we were to search for one single designation for the multitude of multimedia installations, the notion of ‘changeability’ would certainly draw our attention. Changeability refers to an artwork’s potentiality to change, to transform from one condition to another, from one appearance or constitution to a different one, and occurrences in time. I return to the issue of time in chapter 6. As opposed to traditional painting or sculpture, multimedia installations invite change through the cycles of their reinstallations and the heterogeneity of media assemblage involved, including the specificity of technology-based media and often the aspects of the participation and involvement of the viewer. In traditional painting or sculpture change is often negatively charged. It can be said that a large number of multimedia installations invite changeability as a positive value; they inherit change as a fundamental constituent of their identity. The acceptance of changeability may enhance our thinking about and reshape our attitudes towards these artworks.

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54 Furthermore, it is often undesired and tolerated only when there is no alternative. Laurenson discusses irreversible and undesirable change in the traditional conservation framework in terms of damage or loss. Laurenson, "Authenticity, Change and Loss.”

55 Changeability may also be extended to the phenomenological space of perception, where it could denote the shifting character of our experience of artworks dependent on environmental circumstances (light, exhibition architecture) and temporal factors (the historical distance to the creator, state of knowledge about the work, etc.). In her book *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (2003) Martha Buskirk, for instance, addresses the issue of changing light conditions affecting the perception of Richard Serra’s *Torqued Ellipses* (1996–1997). Martha Buskirk, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2003), 20.
Change may be extrinsic to an artwork (conservation-related issues, replacements due to the obsolescence of technology-based elements, unless such obsolescence is a part of its concept and any changes that are not intrinsic to the work) or intrinsic to an artwork (change that is ‘built’ into an open work, conceived to be different each time – like Cage’s 4’33”, in which sounds are never the same, or Paik’s plant ensembles in Arche Noah and TV Garden or the process of gathering traces in Zen for Film). The conservator may become involved in all levels of the changeability of an artwork, allowing the artwork to change on the one hand (if the change is intrinsic to it), or, on the other, deciding the limits of change for it to remain the same artwork, ergo to maintain its identity. In cases when distinctions between extrinsic and intrinsic changes become blurred, conservation has to decide whether to allow for such change (Paik’s relics such as Random Access for example).

A multimedia artwork’s potentiality to change may refer to an obvious, physical change – palpable and macroscopically identifiable – and/or a more discrete one, distinguishable with the help of more precise optical devices and requiring profounder knowledge and greater time investment. This aspect links multimedia works of art with traditional art, the materials of which are subject to change often related to ageing and decay. Under the assumption that in its entirety an installation consists of a number of components in interrelated systems of dependencies – a sort of cosmos enfolded in itself – the changeability of its constituents may involve a shift in the relation of the artwork’s elements to one another. In the attempt to impute some kind of order, conservation wrestles with the changeability of materials immersing slowly but constantly towards an entropic end.

Yet the term I propose also refers to a fundamental change of a multimedia work of art, which finds evidence in historical practice. Moreover, changeability may go beyond the paradigm of variability – an extent to which a work can change within a set of rules defined in the score or instruction – which seems to imply sameness rather than difference, and be measured within a range of prescribed parameters with a reference to some kind of a mean value. For instance, the way the term of variability was adapted by Variable Media Network assumes the continuation of artworks independently of the medium used originally. This echoes the discussion of the historical instrumentalisation in the musical performance in chapter 3. Whereas a performance based on a score may vary within the limits provided,

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56 Aspects of chemical and physical change of materials have been widely discussed in conservation and will not be revisited here. In relation to plastics, for instance, which are subject to decay and alteration, and constitute a part of multimedia installations, see Friederike Waentig, Plastics in Art: A Study From the Conservation Point of View (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2009).

57 In statistics, for instance, variability refers to how ‘spread out’ a group of scores is.

58 The VMN’s variable media paradigm refers to a preservation strategy that aims at ‘identifying ways that creative works might outlast their original medium.’ It was employed for a collection of conceptual, minimalist and video art and encourages creators to ‘define their work independently from medium,’ which may enable the translation of the work once its medium falls victim to technical obsolescence. “The Variable Media Network,” Variable Media Network, accessed February 12, 2013, http://www.variablemedia.net/e/welcome.html.
changeability in multimedia works of art allows a transgression of such limits. Changeability happens in time, and is often not reversible.

The concept of changeability may be criticised for mystifying as opposed to clarifying the change intrinsic to multimedia artworks, and conflating the ‘possibility’ of change with the ‘desirability’ of change. It may also run the risk of its interpretation as a term that encompasses all forms of change without specific limits and boundaries. How can limits be established, then, and how can we know whether something is allowed or desirable? Conservation’s engagement with the archive – both as drawing from and with regard to the permission of what enters it – establishes these limits as dependent on judgements related to a set of cultural, political, technical and economic factors that prevail in a given time and context. It will, as it were, render the limits dependent on the cultures of conservation, setting limits on what can be said or made, both with reference to the present, as well as to the past.

In the following sections, I address different forms of changeability in Paik’s multimedia installations abstaining from their evaluation. I discuss Paik’s works in relation to the shift in their conceptual level, the change from a participatory to a static artwork, aspects of the adaptation to the given space, and the obsolescence and upgrade of equipment. In questioning the limits of changeability, I also discuss the possibility of the further development of an artwork. A central role in the changeability of a wide range of multimedia installations is played by the practice of their reinstallation. This aspect links the reinstallation to iteration, which, in turn, is the matter of repetition and difference. This argument was put forward by Tina Fiske in relation to the reinstallation of White Walls by Andy Goldsworthy (2007) and based on the Derridian conviction that ‘the structure of iteration … implies both identity and difference.’ Various iterations of installation may have a different degree of influence on the identity of the work. So, for instance, the iterations of Zen for Film may result in a conceptual shift in the artwork. They may also diverge due to the spatial setting in relation to TV Clock and TV Garden as discussed. Further, the artist’s involvement in the decision to instigate change may become crucial: a significant change can take place posthumously involving the manipulation of a conceptual layer of a work (Zen for Film), or it may come from the artist himself and thus be understood as a further development of a work.

To illustrate the changeability at the conceptual level of the work, I will revisit the example of Zen for Film in the following section and reinforce it by referring to a discussion on change that took place in Zen for TV. Whereas in Zen for Film the change is discernible, the example of Zen for TV confronts us with a more discreet change in the conceptual layer and to a degree loses its significance in the many instantiations produced over the span of four

59 I am indebted to Renée van de Vall for her support in clarifying these aspects.
decades. Similarly, this concealment of change in the conceptual strata occurs in *Moon is the Oldest TV*. What is different in these three examples is the aspect of the involvement of the artist. In section 5.3, the issue of change affecting the participatory character of Paik’s works will be addressed in relation to *Random Access*, *Magnet TV* and *Record Schaschlik*. Here, although in different ways, the installations share a common fate in their afterlife as static artefacts and relics. Furthermore, changeability in relation to site-specificity will be explored using the example of *TV Clock*, *Moon is the Oldest TV* and *TV Garden*. Changeability related to artworks’ manipulations in the process of migration, on the other hand, will involve revisiting *Zen for Film* and *Moon is the Oldest TV*. Finally, and reaching the limits of changeability, I will re-examine the examples of *Zen for TV*, *TV Clock* and *TV Buddha* while exploring simultaneously the idea of the further development of an artwork.

5.2 Changeability Related to the Conceptual Level of an Artwork

Looking at the change occurring in multimedia installations, there seems to be a divergence in relation to the conceptual layer of the works and their material embodiment. Let us look again at *Zen for Film* in this context. The work, as we have noticed, is bound to its display apparatus, which determines its behaviour resulting in a visual performance in which alteration, in the form of a contingent trace, plays a considerable role. Now, when the display apparatus takes a different form – the form of a digital projector displaying a digital file with a recording of *Zen for Film* in a static condition – the entire logic of the work appears to be betrayed. Additionally to the physical change, and because of it, what happened to *Zen for Film* was a change in its conceptual layer. Here, the decisive factor was that this critical conceptual change occurred in the absence of the artist, posthumously. Rather than in a projection of an empty film leader, Paik was interested in the performance of the clear filmstrip run through a projector, and – as I showed in the previous chapter – based his idea on the entire conceptual load of the decade and inspiration by the work of his fellow artists. Like no other cinematic work, Paik’s film inhabits the filmic essence of a translucent medium, making the process of the passage of light through it explicit, and the distinction between other analogue and digital film projections evident. Therefore, due to the nature of the change of the projection undergone, and the medium described in the previous chapter, the changeability in *Zen for Film* may have more substantial consequences than just a physical shift from one display apparatus to another.

Changeability in relation to the conceptual level of an artwork may be observed in another of Paik’s installations – *Zen for TV* (1963, Fig. 5.1). It would be rather superficial to perceive *Zen for TV* as a simple manipulation of a cathode ray tube. The discrete change in *Zen for TV* took place at the level of visual information; I will shortly explain why. It is not quite correct to allege that *Zen for TV* was conceived for Paik’s Parnass show in 1963 in a literary sense. Rather,
it was an outcome of Paik's creative handling of a breakage – a superlative chance operation in Cagean terms and a parallel to Duchamp's *Large Glass* – that apparently occurred during transportation of the equipment from Paik's retreat in Bensberg-Refrath to the venue in Wuppertal. In fact, two monitors arrived broken at the Jährling’s villa. One of them was named after the make of a monitor that was available during its 1976 reconstruction – *Rembrandt Automatic* (private collection in Bremen). The other, lost in 1967 and reconstructed by Paik for the collector Wolfgang Hahn in 1975, was *Zen for TV* (part of the MUMOK collection in Vienna, among others). Paik’s acceptance of the coincidence that arose led to *Zen for TV’s* existence as a work; it was created by adaptation of the given results of a situation, yet not (pre) conceived of, at least in a conventional sense. As opposed to the traditional understanding of how works are developed through a creative process towards the end result, *Zen for TV* was created as in effect of determination of a contingent event. Here, the creative process is contingent, and, retroactively, affirmed as determined. Rather than going from the beginning to the result, as in traditional art based on skill and knowledge of fabrication technique, the result becomes the outset of a determination and a point of departure to the origin. Paik’s technique of determination of contingency is thus retroactive – he uses contingent chance process and goes back over it as a subsequent decision that affects the status of contingency.

In this form of the creative process, there are aspects that are controlled such as turning the monitor at a ninety-degree angle and aspects that are not such as the chance incident that led to the creation of a line.

In effect of the breakage, the vertical deflection ceased to function, and a horizontal line came to life. What Paik needed to do was complete what became one of the most telling examples for the reduction and stillness so characteristic of Zen aesthetics: he turned the monitor on its side. What could have signified a non-functionality, a certain death of vision, was recomposed by Paik and assigned with new meaning, creating a new life based on chance incident. The death, an epic translation from *Entrance to Exit*, from point zero to an acceptance of it as an aesthetic message, echoes somewhat in Brecht’s most poetic score two years later, which, in its reduced Fluxfilm version addresses the relationship between life and death. It can be said that, from then on, instead of pointing to a horizontal separation reassembling the western division between good and bad, heaven and hell, the line occurred as electronic vertical Zenga, the Zen style of painting, which uses quick, expressive brush

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61 The Vienna version of *Zen for TV* carries the label of the original and was a basis for the creation of two further replicas. See Nam June Paik’s notes, 1983, in Jon Hendricks, ed., *Fluxus etc. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection / Addenda II* (Pasadena CA: California Institute of Technology and Baxter Art Gallery, 1983), 285 quoted in Ammer, “In Engineering There is Always the Other – The Other,” 57.

62 Comparable with Duchamp's *Large Glass*.

strokes following intuition and immediacy. Zen’s singular brush stroke in which the entire content of the artistic message is entailed became expressed in the electronic sign, Zen’s serenity in its stillness and Zen’s openness to chance in contingency of this gesture. The line, as the Zen calligraphy, portrays the ‘heart of thing,’ a concentrated image ready to enfold its compressed energy. It is a source of spiritual power, meditation and teaching, which somewhat echoes Barnett Newman’s ‘Zip Paintings’ (starting from the 1940s) that provided the viewer with a full experience, a certain totality. In Paik’s *Zen for TV*, the straight line may stand for an enlightenment as a sudden, immediate flash of intuition reached by breaking with the restrictions of conventional ways of thinking so central to Zen Buddhism. This enlightenment, the concentrated line of compressed electronic light, became a statement of the very bare minimum of existence of form expressed through electronic media.

*Zen for TV* underwent a number of physical changes: it was exhibited in the form of many devices that could well serve as a resource for an inquiry into the aesthetics of television sets based on cathode ray tube technology beginning in the 1960s and continuing to the present day (Fig. 5.2). Yet, contrary to this obvious visual shift in the sculptural appearance of the work, a concealed change took place at the level of the image. The line is a compressed image folded into itself by the lack of the deflection stretching it into the actual size of the tube. If this is an image, we ought to ask: What does it show? Or, more aptly, what does it conceal that we do not see? In other words, and from a contemporary perspective: What did it cease to show in reference to its initial occurrence? During the Parnass gallery show in 1963 and as a number of other manipulated devices in Paik’s ground breaking exhibition, *Zen for TV* was transmitting an analogue TV broadcast in Germany, the only one available in private houses at that time (the second public channel, ZDF, began airing on 1 April 1963). In the compressed line the broadcast was still present. “The TV is not really broken, there is still a picture collapsed in there’ explains Garrin. Only a few know about a simple trick to enfold the picture: while rapidly moving the head to the left and right while watching the line, the image reappears again – the line is being deflected by the viewer. And although the manipulation in *Zen for TV* is concealed, the temporal translation of the artwork using the

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66 Garrin, discussion.
present day TV broadcast is rendered impossible.\textsuperscript{67} Bearing in mind the many manifestations of Zen for TV that were produced after the Parnass show, the idea of a compressed image can still be crucial to the work. It is hard to say, however, how many of the later versions displayed a TV broadcast, which must have changed over the course of time and with regard to the geographical location. The instruction created by Paik for the Silverman acquisition does not disclose any details about a TV channel that must be played.\textsuperscript{68}

A similar form of extrinsic change affecting the conceptual strata of an artwork can be seen in the installation Moon is the Oldest TV (Fig. 5.3). Like Zen for TV, the manipulation here takes place rather discreetly at the visual level. Its basic compilation of twelve monitors emerged from the concept realised on one monitor in 1963 in Parnass, mainly due to economic reasons. Let us shortly recall the technical modification that led to the emergence of Moon is the Oldest TV. The different phases of the electronic moon were generated mechanically by manipulating the picture tube scanner, which was moved to the back. The image of the moon was thus a picture evoked by this distortion, which, together with magnets applied on the tube's neck, created the image. This manipulation was concealed in the casing's inner life and was therefore not noticeable by viewers. Moon is the Oldest TV employed the internal logic of the apparatus to create the image and was discreetly, yet closely amalgamated with its serving technology. Later rearrangements of the sequence of the monitors, as I described, were related to the physical setting of the work in a gallery space, and lacked a larger impact on the conceptual plane. This was, perhaps, with the exception of the symbolic number of the monitors suggesting the twelve months of the year, lost in the twenty-monitor compilation piled for the German Pavilion of the Venice Biennale in 1993 (Fig. 5.4). The discrete conceptual change took place when Paik made the decision to film the images of the lunar sphere with the assistance of Garrin.\textsuperscript{69} The implications of this transfer are far-reaching. What was gained was an installation that was visually unaltered but operating technologically on an entirely new playback system (for a later version played back from a DVD, see Fig. 5.5). What could

\textsuperscript{67} Paik was, however, convinced that the technical manipulations were fully recoverable. With reference to his manipulation of the sinus waves of the TV sets in the Wuppertal exhibition, Paik contended ‘Ich hatte nur eine Diode in die entgegengesetzte Richtung gebracht und erhiet ein "wellenförmiges," negatives Fernsehbild. Wenn meine epigonen denselben Trick anwenden, wird das Ereignis vollkommen dasselbe sein’ (I have only changed the direction of the diode to the opposite direction and received a ‘wavy,’ negative image. If my imitators use exactly the same trick, they will achieve the same result’). Nam June Paik and Edith Decker, Niederschriften eines Kulturnomaden: Aphorismen, Briefe, Texte (Köln: DuMont, 1992), 103-109 quoted in Jesus Muñoz Morcilla, “Überlieferung von Medienkunst und digitale Nachlassverwaltung,” in Neues Erbe: Aspekte, Perspektiven, Konsequenzen der digitalen Überlieferung, eds. Caroline Robertson-von Trotha and Robert Hauser (Karlsruhe: Karlsruher Institut für Technologie, 2011), 124.

\textsuperscript{68} For the instruction, see Hendricks, ed., Fluxus etc., 285 – 288.

\textsuperscript{69} Garrin, discussion. In this context, it is interesting to note that Herzogenrath recalls Paik considering whether digitised versions of his manipulated TVs would generally be more suitable for permanent presentation in a museum. Herzogenrath, ”What is the Original in Video Art,” 30.
be classified as a loss was the significance of the playful manipulation of the cathode ray tubes, which created the form of a visual narrative and which were related to the historical medium embedded in the technological relations of time.\(^\text{70}\)

What *Zen for Film*, *Zen for TV* and *Moon is the Oldest TV* have in common is the degree of conceptual change that they all underwent. Unlike in *Zen for Film*, the change in the *Moon is the Oldest TV* and *Zen for TV* was triggered by the artist himself, who responded to increasing requests for his installations and the pragmatism involved in their handing. The conservation of these works thus faces a multitude of various instantiations – both authorised and unauthorised by the artist – and struggles with the question of which of the many occurrences of the works should be preserved. As I will show in chapter 6, the prioritisation on the basis of the sequential understanding of time is not adequate to approach changeable artworks.

5.3 From Interactivity to Relics: Changeability and the Participatory Artwork

The musealisation of Paik's early examples of participatory art in electronic media such as *Magnet TV* (1965) and *Random Access* (1963) had a crucial impact on their identity. The form of manipulation that they underwent may be classified as a variant of extrinsic changeability related to the artwork's conceptual level. It was evoked by the impossibility of maintaining their aesthetic integrity (by 'preserving them from being used') while sustaining their 'used' values – as pieces to which the audience contributed through participation or manipulation, according to the participatory tradition of Fluxus events as an extension of Duchamp's dictums that a viewer completes the work of art. The participatory aspects of these works are not an inheritance of the twentieth century, but were, as the German art historian Inke Arns puts it, anticipated by Mallarmé's notion of process-based art and become programmatic in the form of open work for the avant-garde art movement.\(^\text{71}\) The idea here was to depart from the 'static object to dynamic process, from contemplative reception to active participation.'

\(^{70}\) According to conservator Joanna Phillips, *Moon is the Oldest TV* was played from a DVD during the Guggenheim exhibition in 2000. Joanna Phillips, "Kunstmaterial oder Elektroschrott?", in *Wann stirbt ein Kunstwerk?*, ed. Angela Matyssek (München: Verlag Silke Schreiber, 2010), 118. In addition to a colour version, a thirteenth monitor was added presenting a bird with a moon. The thirteenth-monitor version of the *Moon is the Oldest TV* at the Nam June Paik Art Center plays Beethoven's *Mondscheinsonate*.

It also recalls the movement already suggested towards the extended authorship divorced from the demagogy of authorship, which Barthes demolished in *Death of the Author*.  

The change that occurred on the participative level over the course of time in *Magnet TV* and *Random Access* disabled the artworks from being activated by the viewer and rendered them static objects of contemplation. Let us now turn to some practical examples. *Magnet TV* results from Paik’s engagement with the manipulation of the inner life of cathode ray tubes and follows a number of earlier experimentations manifested in his Parnass exhibition, which included an early version of *Magnet TV*. A strong horseshoe-shaped magnet and a degausser both interfere with the flow of electrons in the tube creating baffling forms with the magnet’s gravitation field. In the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, for conservation reasons – in a sense to prevent the destruction of the monitor and the magnet – *Magnet TV* is presented without the interference of the viewer (Fig. 5.6). And, although less dynamic, the distortion caused by the magnet placed statically on the casing of the monitor is still viewable. In this solution, which, from a conservation standpoint, is as legitimate as it is contradictory to the artwork’s nature, the work is deprived of its initial function, and becomes a semi-static artefact displaying a kinetic image.

Paik’s interest in ‘time art’ has its roots in his *Exposition of Music – Electronic Television*. This resulted in his idea to involve visitors, encouraging them to press pedals, push buttons and become physically engaged in the installations. Paik claims: ‘As the next step towards more indeterminacy, I wanted to let the audience (or congregation in this case) act and play by itself.’  

This method of creating a space of activity for the viewer, thereby dismantling the passive one-way delivery system, was manifested in *Participation TV*, a term coined by Paik in the 1960s. The concept of *Participation TV*, ‘the one-ness of creator, audience, and critic’ may be seen as an expression of Paik’s intent to reactivate the role of the recipient and a precursor for further developments in efforts to ‘humanize technology.’ ‘Television has attacked us for a lifetime, now we have to strike back’ proclaimed Paik. ‘Communication means two-way communication. One-way communication is indoctrination’ he later continued. His radical thinking about media corresponded with the reception of the Frankfurt School critical theory according to which the manipulation by mass media – as a consciousness industry – rendered

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72 Ibid.  
73 Barthes, *Death of the Author*. For the aspect of participation in art, see also Eva Fotiadi, *The Game of Participation in Art and the Public Sphere*, (Maastricht: Shaker Publishing B.V., 2012).  
74 Nam June Paik, “About the Exhibition of the Music.”  
76 Paik quoted in Stooss and Kellein, *Nam June Paik*, 12.  
the public passive and experience regressive. Random Access consisted of audiotapes attached directly to a wall (the 1978 version is rendered on a panel), which viewers could activate by using the sound head detached from a tape recorder to produce their own auditive output. The intensity and sequence of such compositions were left to the creative capacity of the viewer. Similarly, Record Schaschlik offered the viewer the option to explore random musical access. The work involved four stacks of skewered vinyl and a stylus of a phono pick-up that enabled the viewer to play the music in the preferred sequence. In the form of the proposed accessibility, Random Access might be seen as a forerunner of later technologies of retrieving digital information, whereas Record Schaschlik might be a predecessor of mixing decks known from DJ and clubbing culture.

Random Access may serve as an instance of Paik’s participatory vision for arts, which, like Record Schaschlik, represented his ambition to seek new ways to retrieve information (Fig. 5.7).

Human beings have not really learned how to structure time-based information in recording and retrieval very well, because it is new. No one says that the Encyclopedia Britannica is boring … because you can go to any page of the encyclopedia, to A or B or C or M or X, whereas when you watch videotapes or television, you have to go A, B, C, D, E, F, G. While the comparison is simple, the difference is very big. … until electronic information conquers the random access problem.

Against the sequentiality of access dictated by media such as video and television, Paik aimed at revising issues pertaining to participation, indeterminism and chance.

‘INDETERMINISM and VARIABILITY is the very UNDERDEVELOPED parameter in optical art, although this has been the central problem in music for the last 10 years, (just as parameter SEX is very underdeveloped in music, as opposed to literature and optical art.)’

It is also one of Paik’s works that visualises not only the randomness of the output, but also the very inner life of the device and its functionality (most technology-based art conceals its playback mechanism). Instead of ‘thinking outside the box,’ as the artists and curator Jon

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78 In the book Dialectic of Enlightenment (1944), the German Frankfurt School philosophers Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer coined the term ‘cultural industry’ arguing the resemblance of mass culture with a factory producing standardised cultural goods such as film, radio programmes and magazines, used to manipulate society into passivity and obedience without a possibility of replay. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 94-95.


81 Nam June Paik, “Afterlude to the Exposition of Experimental Television.”
Ippolito puts it, Paik creatively renders its innards exposed and delivers the participant a hands-on experience of how a record player ‘feels.’

So what impact does the withdrawal of the participatory element have on the way the artwork is perceived? During the aforementioned Tate retrospective of Paik’s in Britain, the works were presented in a deactivated, relic-like form (Figs. 5.8 and 5.9). Relics are conventionally associated with religious cult and signify objects remaining as a memorial of a departed saint. They are often parts of a once-living body, and have power and are treated with the deepest veneration. The issue of the elevation of performance props and leftovers to the status of a relic – performative objects – resembles the religious cult practices by the way they find their destination as artworks in a museum vitrine or/and on a pedestal. Importantly, not all props become relics and not all relics derive from performance. Lowenthal ascribes to relics a ‘felt remoteness’ and posits that it is precisely ‘their lack of consequence for the present that lends preserved things much of their charm’ – clearly exemplified by the deactivation of Paik’s works. As I have shown in the previous chapter, this shift from object used in a performance to objects as relics is precisely what links performances with performative objects. This association derives from the conceptual vicinity of media artworks to performances not only in relation to their time structure, but also through Paik’s musicological bias. It also stipulates thinking about fragmentation and fetishisation of the object as a process oriented towards stasis, a certain stoppage in time, which I will discuss further in chapter 6. An interesting insight into the fragmentation of exhibition objects proposes the realm of ethnographic presentations, where objects raise issues of artifactual integrity and autonomy. Similarly to leftovers, ethnographic artefacts are created by the virtue of the manner in which they have been detached and defined.

The preoccupation with the future existence of these objects seems to impose their withdrawal from the participatory aspect in museum displays and from the possible destruction caused by viewers. But the drawback of this strategy is necessarily the depravation of the objects’ initial function. Whereas Magnet TV, despite the absence of the participative factor, still maintained its semi-active appearance, Random Access appeared to lack its

essential material and conceptual element – the random actions of the viewer. Deprived of its participatory moment, Random Access so evidently based on chance and indeterminism, becomes something different than it was, a document of a past performance of sorts. The intermittence of an artwork, its on and off quality, opens up the question of its identity and results from a concept of time that has been radicalised. The ‘switched off’ status of media installations is of much interest in the debate on the sustainability and continuity of artworks and will be addressed here in the section devoted to the concept of ruin (7.5). Yet may this deactivated condition be ‘reversed’? On the occasion of an exhibition devoted to Cage entitled The Anarchy of Silence at Schunck in Heerlen, the Netherlands, among other participatory installations, Random Access could be experienced in a reconstructed form (Fig. 5.10). The reconstructions made by Saueracker allowed the viewer the opportunity to revive the character of interaction, in a way activating the spirit of the performance at the Parnass show. Although such a copy provides the viewer with an experience of the work from the point of view of its material authenticity, it also opens up a discussion about reconstructions in participatory works. Although, for spatial constraints, I will not venture into the legal and ethical issues of reconstruction, in part III, I will discuss the issue of the reconstruction of artworks on the basis of documentary material and tacit knowledge drawn from the archive.

87 In an unpublished interview conducted at MoMA by the conservator Glenn Wharton with Jon Huffman, Paik’s former assistant and a current curator of the Nam June Paik estate, Huffman maintains that Random Access can be shown, just as Record Schaschlik, without function and still remain ‘an interesting exhibition object.’ Jon Huffman, interview by Glenn Wharton, March 13, 2012, transcript of the interview, archive of the conservation department, MoMA.

88 For further discussions on Tate’s exhibition of Paik’s deactivated works, see “December/January theme on CRUMB: Nam June Paik.”


90 The derogatory value of the notions of replica, copy, or pastiche point to their negation of the criterion of originality of art, which, often, and especially in the present day, considers the importance of the master’s hand – a derivate of nineteenth century romanticism. The issue of replication, authorisation and the different roles of artists and stakeholders was a focus of the workshop “Inherent Vice: The Replica and its Implications in Modern Sculpture,” Tate Papers, 8 (2007), accessed December 12, 2012. http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/issue-08. For further discussion on replication see Leo Koerner, “Copies Creating Originals,” in Coping With the Past: Creative Perspectives on Conservation and Restoration, eds. Pasquale Gagliardi, Bruno Latour, Pedro Memelsdorff (Fondazione Giorgio Cini Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 2010), 1-16; and Wolfgang Ullrich, Raffinierte Kunst: Übung vor Reproduktionen (Berlin: Verlag Klaus Wagenbach, 2009).
5.4 Changeability and the Artwork’s Adaptation to Space  

Can changeability be dictated by spatial circumstances? If we compare, for instance, *TV Garden’s* various instantiations focusing exclusively on its temporary displays, the spatial compositions appear strikingly different. Whereas its Whitney Museum installation was located in an enclosed space, the later Guggenheim embodiment was draped around the ramp of the museum’s rotunda. Similarly, the arrangement of the work at the Kunsthalle Bremen involved an elevated platform that provided the viewer with an elevated position from which to overlook the garden, whereas the Charleloi version in Belgium was presented as a terraced pyramid, to which the viewer might have gained access to the *TV Garden* by climbing the stairs.  

When examining the architectural setting of *TV Garden* in the three permanent collections (Guggenheim Museum in New York, K 21 Collection North-Rein Westphalia in Düsseldorf and Nam June Paik Art Center in Seoul), it might be observed that the changeability is not only limited to the *TV Garden*’s singular presence in the collection, but might also vary within one institution according to different exhibition concepts, as was the case, for instance in the Guggenheim exhibitions in 2000 (draped around the rotunda) and in 2003 (cumulated in an enclosed space). A similar situation occurs with regard to *Moon is the Oldest TV*, the spatial arrangement of which shifted considerably from its initial, linear, slightly spherical version to an expanded block of monitors piled upon one another in the side room of the German Pavilion in Venice (1993). Similarly, *Arche Noah* was enhanced with green office plants during the exhibition in Fundació Joan Miró in Barcelona in 1992, where Paik decided to interfere with the topology of the space in relation to the installation by allowing his assistant to add the green plants. Site-specific factors and financial constraints were decisive for the change that occurred in *TV Clock*, resulting in its twelve and, later 24-monitor version, the latter also being an outcome of a further development of the artist’s concept. The changeability that relates to the questions of space is dependent on conceptual and economical factors dictated by the institution, often by the exhibition curator. According to Paik: ‘… The video curators in the next and subsequent generations will re-interpretate and install them every time new in their anpassendes Place. …’ So both in conceiving of the exhibition context and concepts, the curators and conservators but also the artist and his assistants are responsible for shaping the spatial occurrences of multimedia installations. In museums, it is often the work’s earlier documentation that is consulted before a decision about site-specific adaptation is made. The
documentation of a work’s display shapes its future reinstallations – the cycle ends where it began.\textsuperscript{94} Once again, the starting point and the destination will be the archive.

### 5.5 Upgrade of Display and Playback Formats

The upgrade of display and playback equipment and data formats is an extrinsic form of change and involves intentionality, whether of artist, curator or conservator. It does not necessarily have to result in a conceptual shift, as was discussed in the case of the presentation of Zen for Film or Moon is the Oldest TV in a digitised form described in section 5.2. For the uninformed viewer, if the playback equipment is concealed and the data serves only to play back visual content, the migration of the data format and the equipment does not affect the artwork’s perception.\textsuperscript{95} The processes of migration and emulation of data are only seldom explicated on a wall caption; rather, they take place backstage and are concealed from the viewer’s eyes. And although digitisation may affect the concept, which is based on what one knows about the installation rather than what one perceives, this was not the case for Arche Noah.\textsuperscript{96} The initial playback equipment in Arche Noah – laser disc players – were replaced by CF players. As a rule, Paik’s early works ran on diverse video formats, such as ¾ inch tape and U-matic, and migrated to a more reliable and ‘state of the art’ technology of laser disc player in the 1990s.\textsuperscript{97} In this light it is relevant to recall the certificate that Solway issued in 1990s. Preoccupied by the difficulties that some collectors signalled in relation to the playback equipment in Paik’s installations, Solway designed a certificate that authorised the modification of his work in the future:

I, Nam June Paik, the artists of the above listed work, grant my permission for the owner of this work to make the following types of modifications to this work to maintain the continued operations of the work in the future days. I state that these modifications do not change the authenticity of this work as an original work by me.

1. Television sets may be replaced with newer model hardware, by the same or different manufacturer, with substantially the same television screen size.
2. Laser disc players may be replaced with newer models or newer technology to play the software. The software may be converted to be compatible with any new technology.

\textsuperscript{94} On the other hand, it would be wrong to underestimate the role of installations in shaping exhibition space. The material and technical aspects of installations cannot be divorced from spatial aspects and thus have an impact on the architecture of an exhibition gallery. For performative aspects of exhibiting, see Katharina Amman, Video Ausstellen: Potenziale der Präsentation (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009).

\textsuperscript{95} The difference of the medium may be seen in its degradation process. For instance, digital video will show pixilation of the image and ‘lossyness’ in repeated de- and compression, whereas an analogue video can experience drop outs, scratches, noise, image blur and oscillations, to name but a few. The spatial and temporal distortions in digital video may occur to a large degree when the digital signal is disrupted, while analogue video degrades in a more continuous, gradual way.

\textsuperscript{96} It could also be argued that what is being perceived is affected by what is known about the work, and complicated by the lack of pure perception.

\textsuperscript{97} Solway, discussion; Patsfall, discussion.
3. Any supporting interior or exterior framework for the television sets may be modified, or re-fabricated, as required, to accommodate a replacement television set or sets, provided that the modification of framework does not substantially alter the visual design intension of the work.

4. If a television set is replaced in work where the design intension requires matching identical screen size and cabinet appearance, then the replacement of one such television with a model of different dimension or appearance requires the replacement of all identical matching sets.

Preoccupied with the future of formats prone to obsolescence, Solway commissioned Paik to sign not only one, but many of these documents. What is striking about this is that it seeks a generic solution for a problem of a larger number of Paik’s heterogeneous installations. Additionally, the involvement of a subjective judgement in the process of the alteration of a work’s appearance may become problematic. Interestingly – and what brings us back to the discussion of musical implications in Paik’s art – these documents may also be seen as an act of freeing the artwork from its dependence on certain physical equipment, a prescribed instrumentalisation (see section 3.4).

Due to a resemblance to Zen for Film and the type of change it underwent, I will shortly recall the installation titled Art Make-Up by Bruce Nauman (1976). The interview conducted by then Tate conservator Laurensen reveals that on the occasion of an exhibition at the Walker Art Center, the initially filmic work employing 16mm film was digitised and operated from a DVD player. Yet Nauman decided to stick to the original audible element of the film projector by recording it and playing it back with the digitised version. ‘… No sound is also different – silent projection – and because it is a reproduction of the original rather than the original, it’s an odd thing to think about. I wasn’t particularly interested in having ... the projector [visible] on the DVD, that wasn’t part of the piece necessarily.’ Here, the importance of the conceptual underpinnings assigned to the value and performance of the playback equipment became manifest with the change in the relationship between the aesthetic output (a projected film) and the presence of the sounds of the running playback machine (projection apparatus). The audible supplement of a recorded film projector draws attention to its loss in digitisation and renders Nauman’s piece something reflexively about remediation (addressed extensively in the chapter Heterotemporalities).

At the time of writing this thesis, there are virtually no works by Paik in a functional condition on display with their initial playback equipment. All installations in the ZKM collection have been upgraded to digital display formats and many museums are running projects in order to find reliable solutions for future presentations. For instance, the playback

98 Software is metonymically used to describe the data transformed by a playback device to a visual form of a moving image of video. Archive of Carl Solway, Cincinnati.
99 Laurensen, “Authenticity, Change and Loss.”
100 Ibid.
equipment of *Untitled (Piano)* from the MoMA collection is scheduled for upgrade. Although I discuss this extensively in section 9.5, it will suffice here to mention that the visible playback equipment plays an important role in visual apprehension and has already been changed from U-Matic to laser disc with the approbation of the artist. As I will show, even with Solway’s certificate, decisions in relation to upgrading formats are not easy to make in the absence of the artist, especially when the apparatus, rather than being hidden, puts both the problem and itself, on display.

5.6 Beyond the Limits: The Artwork’s Further Development

Although it clearly transgresses the notion of changeability within a singular artwork, the last aspect to be addressed in the realm of Paik’s media installations is the possibility of their further development, which might be seen as a result of the creative handling by Paik of his own ideas on the basis of the already realised works. The emerged artworks are often further stages of the initial manifestation of other works and the ongoing reworking and reshaping of the concept on their basis. As a result, the related works that are being conceived can – but do not necessarily have to – demonstrate similarities or a resemblance to the initial work. If there is a close resemblance of the manifestation of a work to its prototypical realisation, we could speak about a series (for instance the series based on the Buddha or Rodin statue facing a monitor). The artist continues to conceive the work further while the work’s prototype is realised and released into its life.\(^{101}\)

Whereas in chapter 3 I show how Paik’s works may vary within one concept comprised in a score or instruction, this section explores artworks that are a preparation for, or a development of, other works that can be traced directly or by circuitous pathways. In the next chapter and in section 7.6 I discuss their relationship with the phenomenological terms of pro- and retention. Virtually every one of Paik’s works invites us to adopt a particular perspective on all other works by providing quotations or references to the past. As mentioned, *TV Garden* was previously exhibited at the Gallery Bonino in New York in 1974 as *TV Sea* – an installation designed to present the video *Global Groove* on multiple screens. Only later did it become a techno-organic garden.\(^{102}\) On the grounds of its visual resemblance, it could be argued that the re-usage of plant arrangement in the later *Arche Noah* is nothing else than an adaptation of the techno-ecological garden from the ensemble of *TV Garden* (fruit metaphor). Surprisingly, *TV Garden* may also take the form of a singular 1940s

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Motorola cabinet equipped with watchmen and silk plants in 1986. Likewise, it is striking that the classical example of early video art – the video *Global Groove* produced in 1973 in cooperation with John J. Godfrey – was re-modelled and developed numerous times, finding its destination, eventually, in diverse installations such as *TV Garden* or its Guggenheim version entitled *Global Groove 2004* (2004) created on the occasion of an eponymous exhibition at the Deutsche Guggenheim in Berlin in 2004.

In the manner of the continuous re-invention and resurrection of his already realised works and by pushing the possibilities of the medium further, Paik conceives of *TV Clock* as a continuation of *Zen for TV* (Figs. 5.11 and 5.12). The making of *TV Clock* follows the logic of *Zen for TV*, only that the yoke related to the movement of the electronic beam has been turned on its head. The inclination of the line takes place gradually on each subsequent monitor, so that the line reassembles the hand of the watch on an axis. As a spatial extension of the twelve-monitor version of *TV Clock* and in effect of a further reshaping of the concept, the installation was extended to a 24-monitor compilation comprising, respectively, twelve black-and-white monitors and twelve colour monitors. The contrast of day and night also responds to the contrast of hot and cold. *TV Clock* refuses to display any accurate time measure, but rather, in a poetical, minimalist, but also static way visualises the mode of time measurement on a watch face.

Paik’s enjoyment and the playful handling of the realisation of *Zen for TV* spawned another adaptation. If we look more closely into the *Untitled* (1968, *TV Sculpture*) created in cooperation with German artist and a member of the group ZERO, Otto Piene, we encounter the same type of manipulation of the tube. The monitor – Symphonic Model TPT 800 – is encrusted with silver grey plastic pearls; it displays a diagonal line obtained following the same principle as the earlier *Zen for TV* and *TV Clock*, with the yoke turned at a forty-five degree angle (Fig.5.13).

It was *TV Buddha* (1974) – a closed-circuit video ensemble – where Paik’s internalised idea of recreation reaches the zenith of artwork’s potentiality for serial realisations and provides

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103 The date of the creation of *TV Clock* in 1963, indicated, for instance, by Hanhardt (Hanhardt, *The Worlds*, 134-135) does not correspond with the fact that in the Wuppertal show in 1963 only the precursor of *TV Clock* – *Zen for TV* – was presented. It would also contradict the fact that the Wuppertal show consisted only of twelve (or thirteen) TV sets, each demonstrating a distinct form of manipulation. Nevertheless, during the course of its life, according to Paik’s wish, *TV Clock* should have been created for each continent – Asia, America and Europe. I was able to retrace *TV Clock* at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum, SBMA in California (built for the show in San Francisco in 1989), *TV Clock* in private hands in Europe (build for his show in Germany and Switzerland in 1992), *TV Clock* designed for the Venice Biennale (1993) and *TV Clock* at the Nam June Paik Art Center. Although Edith Decker-Phillips holds that in 1977 at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, *TV Clock* was presented as a twelve-monitor version due to space and financial constraints (Decker-Phillips, *Paik Video*, 143), my research has revealed that the 24-monitor version was a later development.
us with another example for the further development of an artwork (Fig. 5.14). In what is perhaps one of Paik’s most evocative ensembles, an antique statue of Buddha gazes at its own image transferred to a monitor by a video camera in real time. TV Buddha was initially conceived of as a gap-filler for Paik’s exhibition at the gallery Bonino. Kubota recounts that Paik loved to spend money on junk and antiquities on Canal Street – the Buddha being an example – while she was concerned with their worrisome financial situation. Fortunately, TV Buddha soon paid off – it was the first of Paik’s closed-circuit installations to enter a public collection (Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam), and the first to be sold. On the occasion of its acquisition in 1977 by the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the museum requested that the acquired piece be unique. Paik responded: ‘… Needless to say, I will not make a multiple or something like that. I have too many new ideas to devote my time for the repetition of an old work.’ Needless to say, and symptomatically to his understanding and orchestrating of ideas most consistent with his musical background, TV Buddha spawned perhaps the largest series of works in Paik’s oeuvre (Fig. 5.15). An early instance of it might be seen already in Paik’s contribution to Project ‘74 exhibition in Cologne (1974), where the artist took the place of the statue symbolically representing the antithesis of transcendentalism and technology in his own presence. TV Buddha also spawned the realisation of TV Rodin (1976–78, Fig. 5.16). There, the Buddha was replaced by a miniature statue of Rodin’s Thinker, echoed further in a realisation of a Rodin sitting on a Watchman as a part of the outdoor ensemble Something Pacific (1984), (discussed in section 7.5). Another example of such materialisation might be the minimalist ensemble Buddha (1989, collection ZKM). This installation lacks the monitor and the video image – the Buddha is gazing at a burning candle placed in empty monitor casing. However, of more significance is the sculpture of the Buddha itself. No longer is it


106 Shigeo Kubota, in discussion with the author, December 2010. See also section 3.2.

107 Paik’s letter to the former director of the Stedelij in Amsterdam, Edy de Wilde (September 25, 1977). Archive of the Stedelij Museum. See also Kim, Nam June Paik, 215-216. Ironically, especially in relation to its later multiple existence, the piece proved to be unsalable in the 1960s. When Bonino finally found a collector interested in acquiring TV Buddha with the intention to donate it to the MoMA, the museum refused it. The assumption that this piece was Paik’s first major sale to the museum contradicts with the sale of Participation TV to collector David Bermant made through Howard Wise (Gallery), the later founder of EAI (1971). Glueck, “About Nanda Bonino,” 52.


an antique statue, but Paik’s own sculptural work,\textsuperscript{110} which, in conjunction with his Cologne performance, might result in the assumption that Paik not only made the Buddha, but it embodies Paik himself.

### 5.7 Broadening Horizons Through The Acceptance Of Change

The changeability of Paik’s multimedia artworks expressed in many forms that I have discussed challenges the common assumption of thinking in terms of a singular object or a sequence of performances and broadens the way the identity of these works may become conceptualised. This chapter, in addressing the phenomena of Paik’s changeable works and unfolding a variety of embodiments and forms that they may take, has questioned the limits of what may still be regarded as an ‘acceptable’ manifestation of an artwork.

So how, in conclusion, does changeability help in conceiving of artworks such as \textit{Zen for Film} and others? First, I believe that under the condition of the acceptance of change, changeability may ensure the artwork’s continuation to the future. Yet not all change is welcomed. Survival for its own sake is not necessarily desirable if the object becomes something else. I will return to this point shortly. Second, instead of thinking of the artwork in relation to the number of changes that it has undergone – and additionally to the kind of change addressed in this chapter, one could conceptualise it in relation to the degree of changeability. In this sense, and independently from its form, the degree of changeability of \textit{Zen for Film} would be greater than that of \textit{TV Clock}, while the changeability of \textit{Arche Noah} would be less than that of \textit{TV Garden}. This may also apply to the components of installations. Hypothetically speaking, in \textit{Zen for Film}, the degree of changeability of the filmstrip is greater than that of the projection apparatus. Third, changeability enables us to step back and examine artworks beyond the conventions (of conservation) and paradigms (of variability and such), encouraging reflection not only at the ontological level, but also on the culture and context laid on the conservation’s grounds.

I will now summarise \textit{Zen for Film} succinctly in the light of the types of changeability discussed in the previous sections. \textit{Zen for Film}’s analogue film projection, a relic of 16mm film reel, an ‘object’ in the form of a filmstrip from the Fluxus kit and a digital projection all carry the same title and yet are distinct. Whereas the creation of a filmstrip for the Fluxkit must have taken place upon the acceptance of the artist – and in response to Maciunas’ politics of distribution of Fluxus editions – the display of the film reel as a relic and later

as a digital projection was effected by (historical) exhibition practice. Hypothetically, both the film reel and the strip may still be projected, but, in fact, never are. Are the film reel, the analogue projection and the digitised variant ‘parts’ of the work or rather distinct works? Independently from a certain autonomy they might have acquired – a result of historical practice – I would argue that they are material evidence of the changeability of Zen for Film – changeability that is welcomed by the Zen’s very nature, and the catalyser of which may be sought in its potentiality for transition and the cumulative evidence of historical practice.

Changeability underlies evaluation dependent on context linked with the set of ruling values. From the perspective of our conservation culture – which, interestingly enough, seems in this case to diverge from the culture of curating – the display of Zen for Film as a digital projection is regarded as problematic. Assuming that, hypothetically, Paik would be around to approve of the digital projection, which would not be surprising due to his welcoming attitude towards new technologies, would we, for the sake of acceptance of the artist’s intention, not have to accept his decision?

The judgements made during the decision-making process are dependent on context. The adaptation of TV Clock, Moon is the Oldest TV, Arche Noah and TV Garden to spatial conditions may be acceptable for some, but just as well unacceptable for others. Similarly, the changeability related to the upgrade of the equipment reflects the state of knowledge and set of ruling values that allows its migration and emulation in some cases but prohibits it in others. But was LCD not banned from the technological garden and yet became a part of TV Garden in Seoul? Did Arche Noah without plants not present an entirely distinct picture from that of Arche Noah with plants? – The artist was not directly involved, but his assistant, similarly to the EnBW venue on the occasion of which Arche Noah was presented without the animals. This, again, formed part of a historical practice that changed the work, not aligned with the ruling conservation culture, yet somewhat functioning within another logic – it being a different cultural approach (Seoul) or a necessity dictated by economic conditions (Karlsruhe). Furthermore, what is the relation of the static artworks such as Radom Access, Magnet TV and Record Schaschlik to the interactive installations they once were? Again, this is a subject of judgment – the acceptance or disapproval of an embodied historical practice – which yet does not restrain them from remaining Random Access, Magnet TV and Record Schaschlik. The aforementioned presence of exhibition objects manufactured by Saueracker seems to bridge the desirability of experience on the one hand and the desirability of a relic on the other, rendering it difficult to discern which should prevail. To be sure, within the ruling values and Western conservation culture, it is not possible for an exhibition object to became a surrogate of an artwork. Still, during the course of my research, I encountered surrogates of Zen for Film that endowed me with the most telling experience of it. I cannot help but invite the question of the limits of conservability that are dictated precisely by the boundaries of what is accepted and what is disapproved of in conservation. In other words: What can we
conceive of as changeable, and what transgresses common sense? So, rather than mystifying how we conceive of the identity of that which we conserve, understanding artworks through their changeability opens up horizons of conservation towards grasping both the nature of its artworks and its own decisions as necessarily contextual.
CHAPTER 6.
Time and Conservation

For our duration is not merely one instant replacing another; if it were, there would never be anything but the present – no prolonging of the past into the actual, no evolution, no concrete duration. Duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances. And as the past gnaws without ceasing, there is also no limit to its preservation.

Like the universe as a whole, like each conscious being taken separately, the organism which lives is a thing that endures. Its past, in its entirety, is prolonged into its present, and abides there, actual and acting. Henri Bergson111

6.1 Towards Formulating Questions for a Temporal Critique of Conservation

In order to conserve multimedia installations we have to understand their relationship to time and I do not mean here only the historical allocation on the chronological timeline. Although it can also be true of conservation practices related to traditional media such as painting and sculpture, the questions of time in multimedia installations are of a very complex nature. They are imposed by the ability of artworks to manipulate time on the one hand, and, on the other, by the heterogeneity of their materials that introduce aspects of dispersal and re-assembly addressed in the previous chapter. Such questions are dictated by exhibition, conservation and storage procedures. Moreover, many of these media were conceived during the 1960s and 1970s, marked by changes and transformation. This time was the heyday of Fluxus, and the rise of new forms of artistic expression, technology-based media, conceptual art and performance, when the emerged possibilities for artworks to be re-performed, reproduced, repeated, recorded and replayed appeared on the horizons of creative practices. This introduced a new temporal awareness, and, relevant for my argument concerning the conservation of media, diversely incorporated time in the artworks’ structure.

In the following, I investigate the issue of understanding the time in which change occurs from the conservation point of view. I argue that in order to intervene in these art forms, conservation should recognise their specificity. By looking into particular problems intrinsic to the conservation of multimedia installations I attempt to deliver an alternative view concerning time in conservation. In order to do so, I provide an insight into the theoretical background of conservation based on traditional principles and contested through consideration of the newer tendencies that emerged in the 1980s in response to the specificity of non-traditional artworks. An alternative, other than sequential thinking about time, is discussed, namely the paradigm of duration, one of the main concepts of Bergsonian philosophy. In the following, rather than striving to prove that the Bergsonian conception is adequate to thinking about time in general – which is a task more suited to a philosopher than a conservator – I examine its applicability to thinking about time in and for conservation.112 In this chapter, my argument is based on the conviction that the sequential, spatialised time that Bergson criticised is only partially adaptable for the conservation of multimedia work incorporating video and film because it is questioned by the very nature of such work. This chapter does not, however, exclude the acknowledgement of a certain linearity of decay and physical alteration that is intrinsic to all matter.

In the previous chapter I argued that media works and installations undergo different forms of changeability evoked by a broad variety of factors. The way of thinking about these instantiations and their trajectories has a deep-rooted selective mechanism resulting in one instance of an artwork prevailing over another. Moreover, it should be acknowledged that, for some, it is often the first instantiation of an artwork that is regarded as the most relevant. For example, Canopus’ assumed ‘original’ instance is preferred to the instance involving the damage caused to it; in the same vein, had Zen for Film’s initial, canned film leader not been subjected to wear and tear, it would have been preferred by curators who otherwise have to show a surrogate.113 It could be argued that this mechanism is characteristic to media artworks and installations and different from traditional artworks due to their changeability often resulting from the processes or their de- and re-assembly, heterogeneity of their elements.

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113 In fact, what in common parlance has been named ‘preservation reasons’ often results in exhibiting surrogates, exhibition copies and replicas proving the validity for this statement.
and their specific, heterotemporal character (discussed further in 7.6). With this in mind we may now question whether and under which conditions a certain valency can be assigned to a singular occurrence of a work of art? The assessment of change in an object can only be accomplished comparatively; change may only be identified by means of the juxtaposition of one state of the matter with another. Reconsidering the example of Zen for Film, we have noticed that it occurred as a film projection, Fluxus object (in the form of a film leader, both as a reel and short film strip), and that it has – regardless of whether it was the right thing to do – been transferred to analogue and later digital video projection. These occurrences of Zen for Film give rise to ontologically distinct forms that might develop over time and might just as well be subject to their own intrinsic, medium-specific change. Yet if I narrow down the focus to Zen for Film as a film projection and question which of the many realisations may become classified as truthful (or ‘the real,’ ‘the original,’ using traditional terminology) and which is to be recovered with all effort, a straightforward answer is lacking. Is the first performance of Zen for Film at Maciunas’ loft more significant than its Fluxhall occurrence famously captured in Moore’s photograph? Can Zen for Film’s later museum instantiations re-executed according to the collection policies (and available projection apparatus) be assessed differently than their predecessors? The same set of questions can be tested for applicability on the example of TV Garden. Is the first realisation of TV Garden more significant than the many others that occurred thereafter? This would also perhaps imply that TV Garden’s forerunner – TV Sea – would be the most significant materialisation of the work, which, considering its rather reduced form, seems rather peculiar. This would also devalue many of its realisations to come, including its documenta 6, Kunsthalle Bremen, Guggenheim Museum, K21 and Nam June Paik Art Center instances to name but a few. The situation would not be much different if the recognition of a particular instance of an artwork would fall on one of its subsequent instances. For example, the Guggenheim version would be proclaimed the most significant realisation of TV Garden, on which a judgement of all further instances would be based. So far my account may have seemed to involve works that follow the logic of the re-performance of an allographic, say, musical work, and which, as we know, is changeable due to this very possibility of multiple instantiations and the presence of a score. However, this is not the case if one reconsiders the changeability of Arche Noah; in its dualistic nature it exists as a conventional sculpture and an allographic entity (largely owed to exchangeable materials

114 Traditional artworks and build heritage may also, to a degree, be classified as heterotemporal. Heterotemporality may occur in repainted polychrome sculptures, sculpture supplementation and reconstructions in the place of lost limbs (such as the historical conservation practice on the Laokoön Group, among others), cut, reframed, lined and re-lined paintings, polychrome wood panels removed from altars. In the case of built heritage, the Cologne Cathedral or Gaudi’s Sagrada Familia in Barcelona may stand for heterotemporality imposed by changes and additions to, and ‘completions’ of the buildings over centuries.

115 In conservation literature, the truthful, real, original state of an object is often being referred to in relation to the aim of conservation and the traditional ‘conservation object.’ See Introduction.
such as plants and TV sets). As I have shown, *Arche Noah*’s trajectory entails a number of distinct materialisations in relation to which a similar question might be posed: should the earlier instance of *Arche Noah* be acknowledged, and the later example of its re-execution, for instance the EnBW version, dismissed? We are trapped in a vicious circle. Due to this logic, the early Weisses Haus version would prevail over the subsequent *Multimediale* installation, during which Paik ‘performed’ its authorisation. It would become even more futile if we were to recover *Arche Noah*’s Weisses Haus version for the sake of its originality (meaning close to origins), neglecting its later development. This is independent from any intentionality whatsoever, which may – but, as we have seen, does not necessarily determine – the artwork’s changeability. In this vein, *Canopus* remained bound to its historic appearance not necessarily due to artistic intension, which has not involved the anticipation of damage, but owing to the idea of a particular importance of its singular and apparently authentic historical condition. Doing nothing is doing something, so much can be said; leaving the damage is a certain affirmation of contingency of change and reminiscent of conservation’s much disputed theorem of ‘minimal intervention.’

In the following section I argue that to select one instance of an artwork in order to restore, or, more recently, to conserve it in one singular condition has been – and often still is – the main problem in conservation. The conservation I address leans on tenets of restoration applied in past decades to traditional artworks such as painting and sculpture and still somewhat reverberates in a range of contemporary approaches. The instance of an artwork is traditionally denoted as ‘original’ or ‘authentic.’ Importantly, and very relevant for the discussion of time, it lies (remotely) in the past, often close to a work’s conception and/or first realisation. As I will strive to demonstrate, this bondage to an earlier instance derives from conservation’s understanding of time in terms of its measurement on a chronological timeline and the observations of the linearity of decay and alteration. On the following pages I will focus on the problems that arise from this assumption in relation to Paik’s media installations, leaving open the potentiality for its application to a broader range of media art and traditional art.

In the complex, multilayered trajectory of artworks, while identifying the scope of conservation, can we validate one instance and devalue another? The concept of changeability suggests otherwise. I propose to argue that all instances of artworks undergoing change may be as significant as their former occurrences on which the later change is measured. This excludes the privileged recognition given to a certain instance of a work due to its location in relation to the other instances on a chronological timescale. This chronological order imposing a certain hierarchy reflects conventional thinking about time as a numerable phenomenon and

116 For the terms used in conservation theory, see Introduction.
117 For traditional conservation and its approaches, see Introduction.
ought to be rethought in order to offer a better basis for conservation's approach to changeable works. Changeability places an artwork in a universe of the already realised but also potential transformations. The key to understanding these transformations lies, I believe, in offering a conception of time that is different than the conventional, sequential one and that may supplement the linearity of decay and ageing.\textsuperscript{118}

A logical consequence derived from this confronts us with another question regarding the time concept that lies at the heart of conservation. What kind of time governs conservation? How does conservation understand time? During my review of conservation literature I found a large number of reflections on time in relation to the change of material, meaning and artists’ intention, yet no reference to questioning the time concept.\textsuperscript{119} It seems that the convention of a metrical time measurement conforming to the context in which the discipline emerged was somewhat unconsciously adapted and that the implied linearity of decay was automatically taken over. May we go so far as to say that the concept of time, which lies too close to the root of the conservation rationale, has perhaps been overlooked?

But what kind of conservation is meant here? As I indicated in the introduction of this thesis, although traditional conservation is often juxtaposed with new approaches, in practice it is difficult to draw exact boundaries between traditional and ‘new’ conservation – in the conservation of media installations and contemporary art, the reverberations of traditional conservation are still present. The latter, understood as a set of practices, is not necessarily equivalent with a new theoretical engagement – although it is desirable, it does

\textsuperscript{118} In the following, I interchangeably refer to chronological time and the convention of a metrical time as a method of its measurement that follows the sequential conception of time.

not happen automatically. Moreover, despite the ubiquitous presence of multimedia works of art, the theoretical grounds for their conservation have still to be laid out. The reverberations of traditional conservation are also present in the nomenclature describing the profession as, for instance, restoration, to which I will return shortly.\(^{120}\) Thus, the questions of the concept of time can impossibly be addressed to one or the other ‘conservations,’ but perhaps to the general awareness that lies at the ground of the discipline pertaining to the acclaimed respect for the ‘original,’ attempt to limit change and repair damage. In the following, aware of the possible risk of running over the emerging ideas of many of my fellows and conservation scholars, I will use the word ‘conservation’ in such a generalised form.

6.2 Implied Linearity: Freeze Frame, Singular Condition and Reversibility

The conceptions of time that lie at the heart of conservation have not been articulated clearly, but are rather implicit and leaned on theorems and theories of traditional conservation. In the following I shall gradually dissect them.

The efforts of conservators are often bound with their own temporal awareness and cultural-social-political context. To impose a certain conception concerning the durability of the creative outcome of artistic effort would result in conservation measures taking precedence over ideas of causality that lie beyond artistic creation.\(^{121}\) This is, as Albert Albano puts it ‘an attempt … to permanently lock a work of art into a single moment of time’ by means of imposing ‘our own concept of timelessness’ on it.\(^{122}\) One of the reasons for that may be sought in Brandian separation of the time of creation and the ‘moment’ of the artwork’s recognition by an observer with an interval of historical time, which, imposing linearity, contradicts the processual open character of many multimedia works (to recall only Arche Noah’s amendments by Paik).\(^{123}\) Similarly to Albano, from the point of view of the restoration, in his book *Contemporary Theory of Conservation* (2005), Muñoz Viñas offers a critique of the term ‘restoration’ meaning to return something to its original state.\(^{124}\) He refers to the term found in the Oxford Dictionary according to which restoration designates a process

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\(^{120}\) The terms conservation, restoration and preservation have long been subject to discussions. It is often difficult to draw a line between the various meaning of these terms and the way they are used in professional literature. For a discussion on this matter, see Muñoz Viñas, *Contemporary Theory of Conservation*, 14–25; Clavir, *Preserving What is Valued*, 4–9. Furthermore, the terminology to characterise the tangible cultural heritage agreed upon during the last triennial in New Dehli (15th Triennial Meeting, September 2008) advances the terms of preventive and remedial conservation, and restoration.

\(^{121}\) Albano, “Art in Transition,” 183.

\(^{122}\) Ibid.

\(^{123}\) Valentini, “Cesare Brandi’s Theory of Restoration.”

during which something is restored to an unimpaired condition. In my opinion, this also speaks for the reduction of temporal diversity inherited by much of tangible and in particular electronic, technology-based heritage.

It is worth mentioning that, as a rule, the often-referred-to ‘original state’ concerns the material condition of an artwork and corresponds with the idea of an artwork’s history being restricted to a physical history. At times, however, it may also apply to the ‘concept,’ when the ‘purpose of restoration’ – in the words of Jonathan Ashley-Smith – becomes ‘the conservation of an object so that it can be seen, or even used, in its original concept and original beauty.’ Carol Stringari posits that installations are often purchased from an exhibition and became ‘frozen’ in a state pointing to a certain historical moment. The understanding of an artwork as being ‘locked in time’ was expressed in the term freeze strategies; similarly, the formulation freeze frame paradigm referred to the conservation of an artwork based on scientific analysis under the exclusion of truths derived from phenomenological awareness and interpretation.

The assumed return to a past condition was closely associated with the notion of a state of an artwork as it was intended by the artist. This was, as conservator Steven Dykstra puts it, largely due to the possibility of identifying materials by newly achieved means of scientific analysis introduced to the conservation laboratory in the nineteenth century, and the possibility that arose thereby to clearly discern between the materials used by the artist and added materials. The so-called ‘Cleaning Controversy’ that had a profound impact on Western conservation and formulation of its theories owes much to the opposition of the objectivity of scientific knowledge to the historic-humanistic approach. There is a close relationship between the ‘intended’ instance of a work and what has been referred to as the ‘authentic condition’ (as a rule, material condition). The concept of the authentic condition

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125 Ibid. Furthermore, he contends that conservation is, in classical theories a ‘truth reinforcement’ operation with the goal to reveal and preserve an object’s true nature or condition. Ibid., 91.
126 Caroline, Villers, “Post Minimal Intervention, ” 5.
131 The Cleaning Controversy was also called ‘Ruhemann-Gombrich debate.’ See Introduction; Cesare Brandi, “The Cleaning of Pictures;” Dykstra, “The Artist’s Intentions,” 201.
has already been investigated in depth and will not be re-examined here.\(^{132}\) I also discussed this concept in relation to musical performance revisiting the issue of fidelity to musical work in section 3.4. It is worth emphasising, however, that in traditional conservation the term ‘authentic condition’ seems to be somewhat aligned with the sequential understanding of time – in the life of an artwork, events that occur earlier on the timeline appear to have a higher authentic value than those that occur later.

The ‘authentic’ is often accorded with an early state of the work, while the ‘original’ entails lying somewhere proximate to the origins of an artwork or its conception. This understanding of works in terms of temporal progression following a sequential timeline may lead to peculiar situations pointed out earlier – seeking the origin of *TV Garden* in *TV Sea*, or privileging an early ‘condition’ of *Zen for Film* over a subsequent one.\(^{133}\) Following such a logic would render all Paik’s Wuppertal TV set manipulations from 1963 authentic and the genesis of their occurrences less authentic (*TV Clock*, autographic *Zen for TV*, *Moon is the Oldest TV*, to name just a few). Elsewhere, it resulted in the radical cleaning of wall paintings (e.g. the Sistine Chapel), numerous interventions in classical sculpture (e.g. the Laokoon Group) and paintings stripped of coloured varnishes and glazing (one of the reasons for the aforementioned Cleaning Controversy). In the words of the conservator Helen Glanville: ‘It is an imagined authentic past re-created by the restorer in the present.’\(^{134}\) Already divorced from the ‘original,’ in Barbara Appelbaum’s *Conservation Treatment Methodology* (2009) the appropriate moment in an artwork’s life came to be defined as the ‘ideal state’ that signifies a state ‘defined by time, not by physical description.’\(^{135}\) She claims that in defining an object’s ideal state we first need to choose the time to which we want to refer in terms of the restoration of the object and, accordingly, determine the physical state of an artwork corresponding to it.\(^{136}\) Although relevant for my later argument about the temporal diversity of the archive, the ‘return’ to the past confirms once again the deep-rooted belief in sequentiality and a recoverable past. Susan M. Pearce also puts the preservation of the ‘version of the past’ forward in relation to archaeological conservation.\(^{137}\) She discloses conservation’s wish to recover the ‘true nature’ of an object as effectively the destruction of the evidence of an object


\(^{133}\) Sherri Irvin’s discusses a ‘privileged physical state of the object’ according to which an interpretation takes place, often close to the time of the object’s completion. Sherri Irvin, “The Artist’s Sanction in Contemporary Art,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Vol. 63, No. 4 (Autumn, 2005): 317.

\(^{134}\) Glanville, “Introduction,” xxi.

\(^{135}\) Appelbaum, *Conservation Treatment Methodology*, 176-177.

\(^{136}\) Ibid.

being an ‘encapsulation of its history’ up to the moment of its excavation. On another level, the conservator and author Miriam Clavir demonstrates that this selective approach towards moments in time that pass does not have to be applied solely to singular instances of objects. Inquiring into her field of studies – the conservation of ethnographic collections – she claims that the ‘authentic moment’ in a culture’s history was associated with the value placed in the present on objects from the past as discrete forms of evidence. Similarly, with reference to the preservation and display of ethnographic objects she contends that what happens is the freezing of the indigenous culture’s history in an ethnographic present, which imposes on it an importance ‘within a constructed, fixed period of time.’

In that context, it is worth reviewing another paradigm of conservation from the temporal standpoint. The concept of reversibility, a much contested conservation theorem resulting, if only partially, in the paradigm of minimal intervention, unfolds an implied obedience to a sequential, linear time and, at the same time, attempts to question it. It does so in belief of there being a state of an object to which we may return if the implemented materials and accomplished processes are reversible. The impossibility of a return to an original or a previous state in traditional and multimedia artworks reveals a paradox. It questions the principle of decay and ageing (nothing can ever become younger) and exposes the lack of an appropriate conception of time. ‘World-withdrawal and world-decay can never be undone’ – contends the German philosopher Martin Heidegger. “The works are no longer the same as they once were. It is they themselves, to be sure, that we encounter there, but they themselves are gone by.” This could be understood as a reference not only to time, but also to the ‘world.’ Even if we could restore the object to its original condition (which is not possible, as I have argued), we would not be able to restore its world, so it will always be different from ‘how’ (rather than ‘what’) it was. This also brings us back to the issue of imposing ‘our own concept of timelessness’ as posited earlier by Albano, just as to the uniqueness of a temporal context, in which artworks are accessed.

Reversibility may also refer to the promise of the extractability of a consolidating polymer from a treated material, for example, and refers to the degree of solubility and re-

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138 Ibid.
139 Clavir, Preserving What is Valued, 32.
141 In relation to the implied irreversibility of decay, F. Cramer suggests: ‘Life ... occurs on an irreversible time scale, it is a dissipative structure. … Life is a process that cannot be stopped along its path without a complete breakdown of its networks, without death.’ Cramer, “Durability and Change,” 21 and 23.
143 Ibid.
activability once the treatment is concluded (Beva, Paraloid).144 Yet even the most reversible materials are not fully extractable from the treated structure, and the process, once completed, is an irreversible fact.145 Although recently banned from the American Institute for Conservation (AIC) and other codes of ethics, the paradigm of reversibility, admittedly to a lesser degree, is still present in current conservation approaches and appears in expressions such as ‘perfect reversibility.’146 It could be seen, following the prophecy of the conservator Chris Caple in 2000, as the mother of ethical ideas of the present.147 I am convinced that the storage of Arche Noah’s former supporting construction for its potential ‘return’ to its previous form was underpinned by this paradigm. ‘Consciously or unconsciously’ – contends Glanville addressing reversibility – ‘this is an attempt to turn back the clock, to return to the ’original’ untainted state.’148

A different kind of ‘reversibility’ – an attempt to reinstate a condition that might never have existed before, thus not respecting the linearity of decay and stratification of time intrinsic to architectural objects – reminds us of the thoughts of Viollet-le-Duc, the French restaurateur and father of stylistic restoration responsible for the extensive restoration of French cathedrals in the nineteenth century.149 His attitude towards restoration was that of a relatively high interpretative freedom mediated from the binarism of the respect for the historical testimony (crucial in historicising age) and the ongoing utility of a building such as a church (whereby some historical alteration might have been destroyed).150 His near-contemporary and British opponent, Ruskin – a writer and a thinker rather than a doer like le-Duc – opposed such an approach denominated restoration that tries to interfere with the object of the past as ‘nothing but a lie from the beginning to the end.’151 The reason for this

144 BEVA (invented by Gustav Berger in 1966) and Paraloid were widely implemented in conservation precisely due to these merits.
145 For a critique of reversibility in relation to the notions of retreatability and removability, not yet advancing the conception of time, see Muñoz Viñas, Contemporary Theory of Conservation, 183-188.
146 I reviewed a number of recent publications on the conservation of modern and contemporary art under these aspects. For revisited views in codes of ethics, see Catherine Sease, “Codes of Ethics for Conservation,” International Journal of Cultural Property 7/1 (January 1998): 104.
147 Chris Caple, Conservation Skills: Judgment, Methods and Decision Making (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 64.
was Ruskin’s conviction that the past expressed in historic buildings inherits values that are testimony of past generations to be guarded (if nothing helps we should let it go).\textsuperscript{152}

Was restoration – following Ruskin – a lie? Rather, it could be said that it was underpinned by an inappropriate understanding of time expressed in the phantasm of reversibility in the wish to reverse entropy. Interestingly, the word ‘re-storation’ already involves a hint towards a kind of a rewound time, as it were. From an etymological point of view, it means ‘back to the original place, again,’ also with a sense of ‘undoing.’\textsuperscript{153} In relation to this, the German philosopher and Fluxus artist Bazon Brock maintains: ‘The history can only exist if we accept that the historical past is unique [einmalig] and cannot return, like every instance. One cannot fix it. There has never been the same man, the same church. With reference: the uniqueness [Einmaligkeit] from before one hour is as distant to now as the uniqueness [Einmaligkeit] from before five thousand years.’\textsuperscript{154}

It could be said that this understanding of time is related to the Aristotelian idea of time as a line. Although, admittedly, the temporal irreversibility of decay and alteration (leading to entropy) may imply a certain type of linearity, this concept is not sufficient to encompass the complexity of the existence of multimedia installations in time. As I have shown, if we analyse this ‘linear time’ recorded in the chronological instances of objects, a peculiarity appears in the way the return to the ‘ideal’ or ‘original condition’ contradicts the linear progress of time. It is precisely the impossibility of the return to the ‘original condition’ that the very idea of reversibility is based on. Why would we wish to return to something, if we have not lost it already, as in Origen’s Garden of Eden?\textsuperscript{155} So this understanding of time as linearity in various attempts to restore an object, in other words, is predicated on the notion of reversibility, which does not change the fact of its misinterpretation (as one cannot turn back entropy).

Therefore, I propose to supplement the temporal irreversibility of decay and alteration with an alternative conception of time. I suggest that the key to the acknowledgement of changeability of multimedia works of art expressed in the variety of their instantiations lies in the recognition of the temporal equivalence of the plurality of their occurrences. The freezing and re-freezing of changeable artworks according to epochal convention and its ruling set of


\textsuperscript{154} Bazon Brock, in discussion with the author, July 2010. The square brackets contain the German expressions used by Brock.

\textsuperscript{155} Alessandro Conti refers to the story of the Garden of Eden as a wish ‘to return to a primitive state that is better that the present one.’ According to him, rooted in mythology and Western religious tradition, this vision becomes dangerous in restoration when it induces to pass over the ageing of materials and impose the concept of the return to the original at all costs. Conti, \textit{The History of the Restoration and Conservation of Works of Art}, 1.
values reflects the understanding of time as progress, as succession from one point to another resulting in one instance of an artwork being privileged over another. Here, progress may be understood in a twofold manner: as the progress of time that enables the conservator to employ the newest technological and scientifically informed methods to obtain the preferred result, but also – and relevant for this argument – the progress from the ‘then’ as the object’s ‘most precious’ and ‘original’ state to its changed reality. Instead of turning back to an object’s assumed state that has been but is no more, restoration/conservation is adding new values that result in manufacturing historicity and is actually producing something new.  

From different perspectives, moves have been made towards the acknowledgement of the multiplicity of the artwork’s occurrences in time. Against a fixed and unchanging perception of authenticity, David Lowenthal, for instance, acknowledges the historical palimpsests of built heritage, advocating its endurance through the sequence of changes rather than an original state. Much in the same vein, in her thesis Doing Artworks (2010) van Saaze delivers an overview of key concepts of authenticity and artist’s intention, drawing the conclusion that authenticity, rather than referring to a singular state of an artwork, is constructed through the artwork’s lifetime in terms of a continuous process. These views are highly significant in understanding the dynamics that lie behind multimedia installations and that refuse a traditional reduction to a singular condition. In the following, by adapting different concepts of time for conservation of multimedia artworks, I will take this idea to a different level and offer a theory of temporal equivalence of the multiplicity of artworks’ instantiations and relate them subsequently and irreversibly to the archive.

6.3 The ‘Measurable’ Paradigms of Time and Space in Conservation

Another problem that conservation demonstrates when dealing with the dimension of time is rooted in its deep engagement with measurability and dimensions expressed in magnitudes, and – most of all – drawn from its engagement with measurable space. This is strengthened by the possibilities of chemical analysis employed in the late nineteenth century, and built upon the belief in the objectivity of science. In conservation, time is measured, just like space, which


Lowenthal “Changing Criteria of Authenticity,” 131-134.
Subjects time to space, as it were. Although this already suggests Bergsonian inclinations, I will return to this topic in the following section.

It is my conviction that, in addition to the observations of decay and alteration that imply a certain linearity, the understanding of time as a line constituted of instances originates in conservation's physical-mathematical attitude to objects as measurable things, objects that might be expressed in magnitudes, ciphers and units. This is precisely where the ability of conservation to grasp space takes over – where the dimensions of objects are measured, photographed and mapped. One reason for this may lie in the apparent direct access we have to space. When an installation is being reassembled, we, as conservators, map distances, draw maps and even go so far as to measure the structures using geodetic methods. We know exactly where one element should be placed and with which distance it should occur in relation to another. Change here may be corrected and proved in the documentary record. Yet can we say the same in relation to time? How is time graspable? We may see the effects of it comparing the photographs – the animals of Arche Noah seem to be bright and coloured on the image from Weisses Haus, the vessel shiny and fresh, whereas later inventory photographs show them somewhat patinated and faded. We might say that Arche Noah experienced a change between 1989 and 1991, and up to 2009. Time here is apparently ‘grasped’ by referencing twenty years on the calendar.

Furthermore, in conservation practices, we are able to manipulate spatial relationships (displacing, relocating artworks and changing their dimensions), but when it comes to time, we are perplexed. It could be said that the apparent manipulation of time results in what in common parlance has been called ‘arresting time’ or ‘turning back’ to the moment of an artwork’s conception or to its original condition, which is, as I believe, misleading (as there is no way of reversing entropy). Additionally, the applications of ageing apparatus to conservation materials that imitate the accelerated passage of time through extreme climatic conditions (the adjustment of which takes place by pushing the button) reflects what is at stake and reaffirms the notion of measurable, quantifiable time. It seems that the ability to measure the space and spatial relation developed over decades and employing ever more sophisticated devices to capture macroscopically and microscopically the quantitative change

159 Subjecting space to time – precisely the reverse – echoes Immanuel Kant’s First Critique in which he maintains that time is the ‘inner sense,’ while space is the ‘outer sense.’ In other words, he purports the priority of the inner intuition of time over the externality of space.

160 The aspect of space cannot be addressed further here due to spatial limitations. It is worth remarking in this context that the complexity of time compared with space also preoccupied Paik. Paik, “Input-Time and Output-Time.”

of things in the physically graspable world has rendered conservation’s preoccupation with time reduced to an ordinary measure of duration.

As an Aristotelian inheritance of linearity, time in conservation followed the idea of time expressed in industrial society in measurable clock time regulating and standardising labour and locomotion. It is true, however, that time is more than the measurable quality of it expressed in the sharply fixed medium of the clock and calendar.\(^{162}\)

In the sense of modern philosophical thought, it is a fundamental mistake to identify measurable time with what time actually is. Time perceived by human beings is much more complex than the image of linear succession. There is a time to which we refer as an index while addressing its diverse forms of construction, representation and articulation. Yet the mechanical sequence of instances in the manner of replacement rather than organic continuity fails to enhance the phenomenon of time.

In the following, I propose to supplement the conception of time based on entropy (Second Law of Thermodynamics) and irreversibility of ageing and decay with an alterative concept of duration. Rather than negating that in one of its aspects time may be seen as linear (entropy), I propose to acknowledge its other aspects. Artworks, I argue, are human-cultural products that involve dimensions of time specific to human beings and to technology. The acknowledgement of other aspects of time with regard to multimedia installations will allow for divorcing conservation from thinking about time only as a method of measurement that obscures the plurality of existence of the artworks it affects. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis, this conception may have further implications also for other works of art. It will allow us to venture into the theory of time as duration and heterotemporality. This will be done with the help of the temporal analysis by the French philosopher Henri Bergson, which in my view has profound implications for the solution of conservation’s vicious circles in its engagement with time in relation to multimedia installations. In what follows, I will involve the interpretation of Bergsonian theory by the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze based on his book *Bergsonism* (1961), which discusses the idea of Bergsonian duration and takes on the concept of the virtual and actual. This will be relevant to rethinking the relation of the past, present, and future in time of conservation.

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\(^{162}\) The omnipresence of the common sense definition of time as a method of its measurement – a clock – was introduced fairly late, at the end of the thirteenth century. This also marks the inception of modern homogenous time that replaced traditional methods of time measurement based at unequal intervals calculated by the length of daylight. Hans Ruin and Andrus Er, eds., *Rethinking Time: Essays on History, Memory and Representation* (Södertörn Högska: Södertörn Philosophical Studies 9, 2011), 51-62. According to Cua Lim, who refers to Dipesh Chakrabarty: ‘clock time does not tell the truth of duration but exemplifies a socially objectivated temporality, one that remains “indispensable but inadequate” – a necessary illusion that must be exposed.’ Bliss Cua Lim, *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique* (Duke University Press, 2009), 1-2 and 11.
6.4 Bergsonian Time Versus Time of the Homogenous Magnitudes

The philosophical project of Henri Bergson's (1859–1941) was a response to the notion of time, which, in the demise of nineteenth century, seemed to have existed merely as externalised, spatialised surface phenomenon. Bergson's corrective theory of time was directed to contradict the understanding of time contemporaneous with the standardised public time, the latter being a result of the expansion of railway systems and soon to become a global inheritance still ruling in the present day.

Bergson's philosophical method is based on intuition, as opposed to the numeric measurement of time based on convention. In Bergson's view, time does not exist as a linear entity marked by points of succession of the past, present and future separated from one another – time in this regard coincides merely with the trajectory of a clock hand or the movement of cinematographic apparatus (the latter, as I will show in the chapter 7 being questioned by Deleuze). 'Homogenous time' is equal with what Bergson understood under 'projecting time into space.' As opposed to such homogenous, conventional, spatialised, numerical time, in Bergson's philosophical project we become acquainted with time of heterogeneity, with durée, meaning duration. The durée is 'succession without distinction,' allowing time to be lived an impermeating, indivisible, organic whole. Time is multiplicity but not a sum; the heterogeneity of time presumes a temporal, nonidentical plurality and nonnumerical multiplicity. Although access to it is gained through intuition, Bergsonian time is not a merely subjective time, but a time structure of time itself. Furthermore, Bergsonian thought developed from the concept of duration as subjective time (to which his project often became reduced) to another dimension expressed in the formulation that 'the only subjectivity is time, non-chronological time, grasped in its foundation,' to which we are internal.

At the heart of the Bergsonian time critique lies a founding dualism of his philosophy: the clear distinction between pure duration – a heterogeneous time, and a time-as-space, a homogenous time. The space without duration represents a homogenous, divisible, measurable quantity. Contrary to this, duration without numerical measure implies succession, and not interrupted spatial continuity. Bergson criticises modern, homogenous time of magnitudes,

163 This expression refers to Bergson's description of time of clocks as 'homogenous and measurable magnitude,' which is opposed by his qualitative and heterogeneous notion of time. Henri Bergson, Time and Free Will, trans. F. L. Pogson (London: Elibron Classics, 2005 (1913)), 107.
164 Bergson's temporal critique was laid out and refined mainly in three of his projects: Time and Free Will (1889), Matter and Memory (1896) and Creative Evolution (1907).
166 Bergson, Time and Free Will, 101.
167 Ibid.
168 Deleuze, Bergsonism, 38-47.
the time of clocks (‘translation machines’) and calendars as instruments for time-discipline.\textsuperscript{170}

He believes that the reduction of time to space and numbers is caused by science's capacity to measure points on a line, and simultaneities as starting and end points of movement. The movement is thus expressed in numbers, defining rather the ends of intervals, but failing to reconstruct movement, which is a qualitative change that takes place in what would otherwise be the intervals between two external points.

The Bergsonian concept of time as duration is applicable to thinking about media installations as entities enduring in time, being subject to a continuous, indivisible flux of change. In this temporal critique I address the concept of time that is somewhat implicitly present in conservation’s theoretical underpinnings. For the problem of changeability of artworks and the succession of instances that I raised earlier, Bergson provides a solution:

No doubt, external things change, but their moments do not succeed (in the ordinary sense of the word) one another, except for a consciousness that keeps them in mind. … Although things do not endure as we do ourselves, nevertheless, there must be some incomprehensible reason why phenomena are seen to succeed one another instead of being set out all at once.\textsuperscript{171}

The topology of time for Bergson was different than linear (Aristotelian), theological or cyclical time cultivated by agrarian societies. Opposing the homogenous space consisting of many points adoptable by objects, the Bergsonian conception of time as durée is but first of all a critique of time of natural sciences conceived on the basis of space, fragmented time. Bergsonian durée cannot be subject to fragmentation. Rather, it is the movement of time itself, the permanent, unstoppable changing of things. The concept of duration rests on the idea of there being a present involving a past and an anticipation of a future – an idea that I propose to apply to the understanding of time in conservation contradicting the fragmentation of an object's identity into externally-related moments.

Although my argument is based mainly on Bergsonian theory, it is difficult today to think about Bergson without including his most significant interpreter, Deleuze. In fact, Bergsonism as I understand it, is nowadays barely separable from Deleuze's contribution.\textsuperscript{172}

His expansion on Bergsonian's dualism of virtuality and actuality will resonate in my thinking on the archive (see section 8.5 and 9.3).

In his book \textit{Bergsonism} (1961), Deleuze provides us with a comprehensive insight into Bergsonian's method including his own ideas about the ontology of things. One insight is Deleuze's assumption that 'things must, of necessity, endure in their own way,' which reconfirms Bergson's assertion that ‘…we do not endure alone, external objects, it seems,

\textsuperscript{170} Cua Lim, \textit{Translating Time}, 10.
\textsuperscript{172} I have in mind his books \textit{Bergsonism} and \textit{Cinema 1} and 2.
endure as we do.\textsuperscript{173} This is based on Bergson’s argument that duration was from the start defined as multiplicity, and qualities exist in things no less than they do in consciousness.\textsuperscript{174} Bergson’s assumption of duration outside the ‘self’ elaborated by Deleuze introduces a dimension that may have further consequences for the ‘object of conservation.’ One possible way of its interpretation may suggest a horizon of time not only inherent to the subject (psychological time) but a time that enables objects and artworks to have their own duration. Artworks will thus cease to be ‘screens that denature duration,’ a form of exteriority as it were, and will become temporal multiplicities on their own.\textsuperscript{175} I will return to this shortly.

Another relevant point for understanding time in the conservation of multimedia installations is the Bergsonian visualisation of the idea of the contemporaneity of the past in the form of a cone metaphor, analysed by Deleuze (Fig. 6.1).\textsuperscript{176} ‘The cone is divided into three sections AB, A′B′, A″B″ symbolising a state of coexistence of all layers of the past with the present. The past AB would coexist with the present S under the inclusion of all the sections A′B′ and A″B″. The sections are virtual, symbolically representing the distance of the past in relation to the present, yet including the entirety of the past rather than its particular elements. The identity of duration is presented as an ever-growing image of the past in the present and ‘the conservation and preservation of the past and the present.’\textsuperscript{177} Every following moment contracts and condenses with the former and, simultaneously, ‘always contains, over and above the preceding one, the memory the latter has left it.’\textsuperscript{178} Deleuze maintains:

\begin{quote}
We are too accustomed of thinking in terms of the ‘present.’ We believe that a present is only past when it is replaced by another present. Nevertheless, let us stop and reflect for a moment: How would a new present come about if the old present did not pass at the same moment as it is present? How would any present whatsoever pass, if it were not past at the same time as present? The past would never be constituted if it had not been constituted first of all, at the same time as it was present. There is here, as it were, a fundamental position of time and also the most profound paradox of memory: The past is ‘contemporaneous’ with the present that has been. … The past and the present do not denote two successive moments, but two elements that coexist: One is the present, which does not cease to pass, and the other is the past, which does not cease to be but through which all presents pass.\textsuperscript{179}
\end{quote}
So in the contemporaneity, the past and the present that has been coexist, but the past also preserves itself endlessly in itself, while the present passes. Following this line of thought, would an artwork's present preserve all its pasts? There is a common ground between the Deleuzian notion of actuality and virtuality (both of which are real) and Bergsonian dualism. Deleuze, however, conceives of the past as preserved but no longer acting, or acting indirectly. Bergson, instead, speaks of the acting, abiding, actual past:

> Like the universe as a whole, like each conscious being taken separately, the organism which lives is a thing that endures. Its past, in its entirety, is prolonged to its present, and abides there, actual and acting. How otherwise could we understand that it passes through distinct and well-marked phases, that it changes its age—in short, that it has a history?180

This duration of the past is crucial when rethinking the notion of time in conservation (and restoration) that is preoccupied with searching for the past authentic condition of an artwork as the one that ceased to be present. The past, for Bergson, is alongside the present—a concept distinct from conventional ways of thinking about past, present and future as separable realms.181 Duration is the survival of the past, an ever-accumulating ontological memory that is wholly, automatically and ceaselessly preserved. In duration, the current moment does not depose that which came before. Following the Bergsonian conception of time and its Deleuzian interpretation, I propose that in changeable multimedia works of art, the present is the survival of the past. Rather than being virtual, in the process of conservation, the past is actualised in the present, the latter being the only status we are able to analyse from our inhabited temporal perspective.182 Duration is, I argue, crucial for understanding the continuity of artworks and essential to divorcing conservation from its traditional views of time. Moreover—and more profoundly discussed in part III Archive and Identity—it is also relevant for the consideration of the archive. So rather than considering the most justifiable point of return to a condition or state of the artwork from the past, the Bergsonian concept of duration offers us a profounder model to rethink the presumptions of conservation. A possible consequence of the application of durée to works characterised by change is that their...

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180 'How otherwise could we understand that it passes through distinct and well-marked phases, that it changes its age—in short, that it has a history?' Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 15. For the Deleuzian view on the virtual past, see Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 55. This matter is also discussed in Suzanne Guerlac, *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Henri Bergson* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), 187-188.

181 According to Lowenthal, the differentiation of past and present is a rather recent development and can be associated with a chronological time scale. The past as a state of things no longer existing emerged during the Renaissance when the remoteness of ancient Rome and unlikeness of recent medial times became apparent. Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 390.

182 Much of my thinking here and in the subsequent section is inspired by Bliss Cua Lim and her book entitled *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and the Temporal Critique*. Drawing from Bergson’s (and Deleuze’s) philosophic project, she takes on the discussion of time in relation to fantastic cinema. Cua Lim, *Translating Time*. 

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changeability expressed by the multitude of instances may unrestrictedly exist in a continuum of duration. In other words, each instantiation of a changeable artwork preserves the former.

To explain how artworks’ changeability can be understood in continuum in relation to their previous and future manifestations, I will shortly need to change the scope of this discussion from the ontology of time to phenomenology – the philosophy of consciousness as dependent on subject. The continuum of duration encompasses what might be defined as retentions and protensions responding to the factual existence of an artwork’s former and upcoming instantiations. This also links us again with the idea of the open work. Retentions and protensions create a conceptual realm of duration where the past is rendered present, insofar as in this present it is being actualised. In such a conceptual framework, changeability would not be rendered passive, directed to the instances that have been. The vectors of the continuum of changeability point in both directions. Protensions might be conceived of as an openness of the artwork to its future changeability. In these terms, potentiality is closely related to contingency. This scenario takes place in the archive. For now it shall suffice to say that in this metaphysical realm of an artwork’s destination, preservation continues without relaxation. In such a way, from an ontological perspective, the past is preserved automatically, as it were.

In sum, the orientation of conservation towards the past is a gesture reassembling back-and-forth movements between abstract times, or at best a misinterpretation of linearity – we ‘take care of the past’ and ‘pass it over to the future.’ If the past is exactly as contemporary as the present, then we do not need to ‘preserve the past’ in the traditional meaning of the word, but preserve the present. In fact the present is the only reality given, and the only one to be preserved. In the case of multimedia installations, conservation could thus be defined as a process that shapes the changeability of artworks, yet does not prevent it. If anything, it could contribute to the reduction of the degree of changeability. So in my thinking – and following Bergsonian durée – artworks as objects that undergo transformation, abide in their present (and only) ‘condition,’ which is constituted by their many different pasts. In other words, they are constructed by their ‘present’ as much as by their ‘past conditions.’ This is in accordance with the argument put forward by Muñoz Viñas that the only ‘authentic condition’ that we know is the condition in which the artwork currently is. This may not

183 The idea of retention and protention is based on Husserl’s phenomenology of temporality, in which he neglects the experience of the world as a series of unconnected instances. So the protention is distinct from the immediate experience but still retained in our consciousness. Protention relates to the perception of the moment that has yet to be perceived. The continuity rests upon the idea that each moment of the protention becomes a retention of the next. Francisco J. Varela, “The Specious Present: A Neurophenomenology of Time Consciousness,” in Naturalizing Phenomenology: Issues in Contemporary Phenomenology and Cognitive Science, eds. Jean, Petitot et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 266-329.

184 For the idea of the preservation without relaxation see Bergson’s Creative Evolution.

185 Muñoz Viñas, Contemporary Theory of Conservation, 94.
only result in abandoning the search for authenticity somewhere in the remote past but may also shift conservation from its attempt to manage change (measured on an artwork's former conditions) to a process intervening in the artwork's temporality. I elaborate on this thought in section 7.4. Furthermore, it will unquestionably release conservation from the drive to 'recover the past' and 'the original' or 'give back the authentic object,' which, from my point of view, are misguided approaches based on an incorrect conception of time. As I suggested, the applicability of this proposition may reach beyond the conservation of Paik's multimedia works discussed here, and, if taken seriously, could also have an impact on traditional art. Whether related to traditional art or multimedia, it should not be left unmentioned that conservation may by no means claim to be neutral. Each intervention, as we already know, is a process that transforms the work of art. Furthermore, conservation is, according to Brandi, a moment of the methodological recognition of a work, an instantaneous appropriation in which the consciousness of the observer recognises an object as a work of art.\footnote{Brandi, \textit{Theory of Restoration}, 48. For coherence, I replaced the originally used 'restoration' with 'conservation.'} In discussing the significance of the past, Lowenthal holds that 'every act of recognition alters what survives.'\footnote{Lowenthal, \textit{The Past is a Foreign Country}, 390.} He adds to it a positive value – the past can be used fruitfully when it is 'domesticated,' 'to inherit is to transform.'\footnote{Ibid., 412.}

6.5 The Captive Moment: Motion as Continuum Versus Instance as a Photogram

The Bergsonian philosophy of time allows us to understand multimedia artworks' continuation in duration as opposed to the fragmentation of time expressed in its extracted moments. To illustrate this, I found the example of early photography struggling with the depiction of the continuum of motion useful (Figs. 6.2 and 6.3). These two chronophotographic experiments may be understood as a visual metaphor that illustrates the differences between the spatialised and the durational concepts of time and illuminate my argument concerning the continuum of changeability in artworks.\footnote{They are addressed here insofar as they illustrate the problem of spatialised and duration time. For a further discussion of chronophotography, as the precursor of moving images, see section 7.2.} The French scientist Etienne-Jules Marey's experimentation with the attempt to capture motion resulted in a most fascinating depiction of human and animal movement.\footnote{Marey, who studied locomotion and was actually a physicist, rather than a photographer, invented chronophotography in 1882. It is said to be a precursor to Lumières brothers' cinematograph, which perfected the illusion of motion.} In order to decompose the human/animal movement in instantaneous exposures, Marey implemented only one camera placed at one standpoint. The movement of the photographed object is reconstructed by a sequence of overlapping segments superimposed

\begin{itemize}
\item Brandi, \textit{Theory of Restoration}, 48. For coherence, I replaced the originally used 'restoration' with 'conservation.'
\item Lowenthal, \textit{The Past is a Foreign Country}, 390.
\item Ibid., 412.
\item Marey, who studied locomotion and was actually a physicist, rather than a photographer, invented chronophotography in 1882. It is said to be a precursor to Lumières brothers' cinematograph, which perfected the illusion of motion.
\end{itemize}
on a composition on one photographic plate. Rather than being a series of stoppages in time, the photographic motion is, as it were, spread on the plate. Marey’s contemporary, the British photographer Eadweard Muybridge succeeded in visualising motion for anatomical studies. His photographs were taken by a number of cameras resulting in a series of images of objects, animals and humans in motion. Now, if we reconsider Bergson’s affirmation of *durée*, Marey’s telling illusion of motion seems to be its rather proximate resemblance, whereas Muybridge’s series may stand for time as a spatialised dimension, constructed by interruptions of chronological events. Looking at Marey’s quasi continuation of motion and transferring it into the changeability of installations, we may envision an almost uninterrupted continuum of change expressed in a number of documentary snapshots. As on Marey’s plate, the transition takes place in a ghostly overlapping of forms that merge with one another, creating an approximation of fluidity, blurred in some fragments, distinct in others, and by no means separable. In contrast, Muybridge’s sequential chronophotographies reassembling the sequence of a filmstrip are somewhat separated and taken out of the wholeness of the object in motion. They all stand for themselves, and although it is the motion that they attempt to represent, they first have to be subsumed to arrive at continuation. They are, paradoxically, frozen in their condition, ready to be extracted and inserted in another series, somewhere else.

Muybridge’s chronophotographic example illustrates the analogy to artwork’s trajectory divided into a separated number of instances – stoppages in time – and contradicts the idea of an uninterrupted endurance. This stoppage, to use a photographic analogy, becomes a snapshot of what is otherwise a continuum, a snapshot of an event that has neither yet been completed, nor really appeared in its whole. Thierry de Duve’s consideration of a photographic snapshot may help us to understand this concept. According to him ‘in the snapshot, the present tense, as a hypothetical model of temporality, would annihilate itself through splitting: always too early to see the event occur at the surface; always too late to witness its happening in reality.’ Photograph becomes, according to de Duve, an event that is hung on the wall. Because reality, as we have learned from Bergson, is made of things that are continuously happening and that have a durational character, it is impossible to conceptualise it as constituted of a series of interruptions, singular *nows*. If we translate these insights into some of the practices of conservation, the captive moment may be seen as locking the natural flux of time of artworks by producing another temporality, at times, a temporality of ‘frozen’ works, or works ‘turned back’ to their ‘original state.’ The paradox of a temporal snapshot may stand for the petrification of the continuity of multimedia works of art and could thus be seen as a metaphor for one of the most profound and far-reaching problems of conservation operating from within a conventional temporal framework (I illustrated this using the examples of the Sistine Chapel, the Laokoön Group, and, of course, Paik’s installations). The

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snapshot may also stand for the traditionalisation of otherwise dynamic works that evolve over time and which are characterised by changeability. This traditionalisation seems to be somewhat expressed in a documentary record of which the photographs, graphs and written testimony interrupt the continuum in a manner of traditional art and make it available by placing it – rather than on a wall – in an archival register.

6.6 Translating Time, Transforming Objects: What Conservation Could Learn From Bergson

To conclude, the assumption of singular instances of an artwork in time existing, extricable from a temporal continuity and discernable from all other instantiations, to be assigned with higher or lower valency, is being replaced by the multiplicity of a multimedia artwork’s temporal existence expressed through changeability. This temporal plurality complicates the notion of uniqueness related, as rule, to a work’s singular material appearance. Artworks are interventions in time; the attempt to return to this intervention is necessarily impossible. An intervention in time may only be repeated, yet it will always take place in another time. Trying to restore accurately the conditions when an intervention in time took place would fail because time does not stop; in Bergsonian terms it is a pure continuity, a qualitative and multiple temporal dimension. As a consequence, conservation following sequential time may only moderate the process: either it restores the object denying its temporal character or it redoes the object, obliterating its material authenticity.

Conservation following the Bergsonian conception of durée does not fall into this alternative. The trajectory of a multimedia work of art ceases to be a series of instances and becomes a mirror of the continuum of its transformation in duration. The locus and resource of a work’s durée is the archive from which conservation is being served and which it simultaneously creates. Conservation partakes in an act of recognition of an artwork’s pasts as integral to its present; rather than recovering the past, it is an act of the adaptation of an artwork to the present. Moreover, the past ceases to be a remote thing lying distant on a chronological scale, separated from us and foreign, so tempting to return to, so awaiting being re-stored. It is here, present and durational; it is – in the words of Lowenthal – ‘resurrected into an ever-changing present’.

The notion of uniqueness of an artwork is related to a special role of the artist crystallised in romanticism. For further discussion of this, see Muñoz Viñas, Contemporary Theory of Conservation, 3. For a discussion on uniqueness using examples of Paik’s works, see section 3.3.

This collides with the concept of artwork that transcends time, which goes back to the Renaissance and to a platonic idea of perfection of form and transcending history.

Authenticity may also be derived from the autographic moment. The authentic character of a work is denied if an autographic moment is repeated by others. Furthermore, the captive moment may produce a static object.

Lowenthal, The Past is a Foreign Country, 412.
CHAPTER 7.
Heterotemporalities: Inside and Outside of the Medium

7.1 Media Temporalities: Film-, Video-, and Paik Time

I think I understand time better than the video artists who came from painting-sculpture. … Music is the manipulation of time. … As painters understand abstract space, I understand abstract time. Nam June Paik\textsuperscript{196}

These words articulate that there can be a different understanding of time in various media and that the musicological roots of Paik’s media art impose on those conceptualising them a particular engagement with time. Paik reassures us that ‘At any rate, one must stress that this is neither painting nor sculpture, but a “time- art”’.\textsuperscript{197} To grasp time in media signifies a deep preoccupation with its specificity and the ways in which it is manipulated. The conservation of installations incorporating media components has to engage with specific media temporalities and devise new ways of dealing with time. The relation of conservation to time, as I showed in the last chapter, has to be rethought with regard to its own canon and principles – the time of conservation, but also under the consideration of time that imbues objects and time that is affected by them – the time of the media.\textsuperscript{198}

This is precisely the moment in which the Bergsonian theory serves the thesis’ argument by introducing a heterotemporal possibility for the existence of time. This heterotemporality will allow for venturing into the world of artworks enfolded in the individual temporalities of the many heterogeneous components that constitute them. It will take us on journey into the micro and macrocosmos of multimedia revealing their inner temporal relations and the relation to the museum and ‘the outside.’ Bergsonian theory criticises, as I have shown, sequential, spatialised time and it is this time that is also questioned by the


\textsuperscript{198} It somewhat also resonates with Stiegler’s theory of time according to which time both deploys technological media and is deployed within them (see section 7.9)
very nature of multimedia work incorporating video and film. Consequently, this conception
of time is of necessity inappropriate for conservation of these works. The acknowledgement
of the heterotemporal existence of an object in time will allow conservation to approach its
‘objects’ not only with a profounder awareness of time, but with diversified strategies adapted
to their particular characteristics.  

One of the main problems leading to the underestimated value of time in conservation
was that it did not accept the turn of the 1960s and 1970s in art towards different forms
of artistic expression that incorporated time in their structure and introduction of media
artworks with their divergence from conventional temporality. These decades marked by
change and transformation evoked a different perception of time and resulted in the rise of
new technologies, visions of globalism, innovative collaborations of artists and engineers, and
landmarks in art criticism. Just as important, I argue, is the 1960’s love of technology and
the different understanding of processed time that came with it. The application of technology
as an artistic means opened up the possibilities of an open-ended creative processing of time,
which is already discernible in Paik’s multimedia installations discussed in this thesis.

The post 1960s works realise something about time and affirm time. In relation to the
art of this period, critic and curator Anne-Marie Duguet posited: “Time emerged not only as
a recurrent theme but also as a constituent parameter of the very nature of an art work.”
If these artworks bring the time issue to the fore, conservation’s imperative is to scrutinise it in
order to consider the nature of its object. This is also to approximate an answer to the question
from the beginning of this thesis pertaining to our understanding of what the artwork is and
how, from the standpoint of conservation, it functions within and beyond a certain historical
moment.

Media art incites us to think in unaccustomed ways about time. Ever since the
technologies of sending images in *camera obscura* and storing images in *lanterna magica* were
developed – drawing the attention to the issue of time – the history of the preoccupation with
time and the management of the existent and generated temporalities in media took their
beginnings. Following McLuhan’s proposition that the ‘content’ of any medium is always

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199 Worth mentioning in the context of the proposed heterotemporality based on Bergsonism is the idea of
‘hybrid times’ and ‘temporal trajectories’ put forward by Steve Benford and Gabriella Giannachi in relation
to art forms from the edge of live performance and (interactive) media installations. Steve Benford and

200 For a discussion on the perception of time and its reverberation in the aftermath of these decades, see
David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford:
(Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2004). For art and technology, see Pontus Hultén and Frank Königsgberg,
*9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering. Experiments in Art and Technology* (New York: The Foundation for
Contemporary Performance Arts, 1966), 3-12; and Shanken, “Art in the Information Age.”


202 For the development of optical media, see Friedrich Kittler, *Optical Media* (Cambridge, Malden MA:
Polity Press, 2002).
reflected in another medium and looking into the characteristics of the works discussed here, we may contend that time is an essential component of multimedia and technology-based installations.

Yet the time that governs the medium is not its effect – the imprint of time expressed in the process of alteration characteristic to all artworks and successfully elaborated on in a great number of studies in the conservation of traditional visual arts. Time has a much profounder relationship with multimedia works of art. The media of video and film are essentially about *processing time*. In video and film, from the traditional media of a film projector through diverse playback devises up to contemporary digital techniques, time is being recorded, converted, rewound, forwarded, arrested, condensed, compressed and unfolded – stretched and expanded. All together, in these media, time becomes a virtually tangible dimension that can be manipulated.203

Furthermore, like no other art form in the history of art making, media art refers to – and is embedded in – technological possibilities of the time in which it originates. So contrary to a painting or sculpture in which the tool and the medium, at least to a degree, remain timeless (even if culturally and historically specific within a longue durée), the media apparatus is always temporally referential and, seen from a current perspective, imposes a shift in perception from now to then.

In the following, reviewing film, video and media time, I will propose a deeper consideration of the time of the ‘object’ of conservation. This is in line with the dictum that a work of art conditions the conservation and not vice versa, and that the latter is, as I have already mentioned, the methodological moment of recognition of a work of art as such.204

### 7.2 Cinematic Time: The Time of the Film

The manipulable time is an essential component of the cinematic medium; it becomes clear when contemplating Paik’s *Zen for Film* under consideration of aspects of its specific temporality. In the following, to illustrate how the particular engagement of the medium with time experiences a transition from static image to the illusion of movement, I will explore the time of the medium of film on the basis of its development from photography. Subsequently, I will examine the time of *Zen for Film* and revisit its materiality as being intrinsically about processing time.

The different modes of thinking about time in film (and cinema) are related, on the one hand, to the motion of the film through the projecting apparatus, and, on the other, to the spectator’s immersion in another time dimension – recorded time and temporalities.

203 For the aspect of time in media discussed in the context of curation of new media art, see Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook, *Rethinking Curating: Art After New Media* (Cambridge MA and London: The MIT Press, 2010), 87-91.

different than his/her own. The time of the film is bound with the cinematic time, imposing a relationship between the apparatus and the spectacle of viewing. According to the French philosopher Michael Foucault, this immersion into other temporalities is a safe enterprise, with the assurance of returning to one’s own. Cinematic time brought with it the possibility of entering other temporalities, and the promise of overcoming human finitude – a sort of immortality per se through the recordability of time. Last but not least, it also introduced the possibility of the archivability of time. Although, as it seems, in contrast to the temporality of the cinema, photography is permeated with a certain ‘pastness,’ the cinema itself poses at least two temporalities, that of the viewer and its experienced ‘event’ (spectatorial experience of the filmic flow) and that of the historicity of images made at a particular historical moment. So both the film technology and its narrative become dated – the images, just as photographic images, bear witness to the temporal moment in which they were recorded. Cinema and photography became practices with epistemological consequences.

The film is a further development of photography, which seems to be able to arrest a moment that it is recording with every successful usage of the shutter. This moment stands for a signature of temporality, an indexical sign of the present, a promise of the rematerialisation of time. In her book *The Emergence of Cinematic Time* (2002), the American film theorist Mary Ann Doane underlines the impact of photography on the perception of the ‘moment’ as historically decisive. She maintains that “The snapping of the camera shares with the other modern technologies the drive to condense time, the inspiration for instantaneity.”

The moment in photography is free from any hieratic subordinations; it is, in opposition to film with its clear sequential structure, indeterminate. As I have suggested in *The Captive Moment*, the issue of ‘capturing the moment’ by instantaneous photography may, however, become complicated when seeing it from the perspective of conception of reality in terms of continuum familiar from Bergsonian indivisibility of real time. If reality does not consist of moments but is made of – in the words of Belgian art historian and theoretician Thierry de Duve – the ‘continuous happenings of things,’ the capturing of the moment in photography remains an impossible posture, producing a frozen gestalt, petrified versions of an otherwise fluid continuum. Notwithstanding its complex temporality, in common understanding, the product of photography suggests not only that time has indeed been paused, that it has

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206 Roland Barthes claimed the distinction between the contingency of the cinema in relation to its temporality (present tense) and the photographic ‘past’ of having been there of the thing. It is, similar to the argument just presented, not a complete view. For a detailed discussion on this matter, see Doane, *The emergence of Cinematic Time*, 142-143.
207 Ibid., 14.
208 Ibid.
209 Thierry De Duve, “Time Exposure and Snapshot.”
experienced stoppage, but that the photographed event occurring only once might have been transcended – photography thus is able to repeat what could never be existentially repeated.\textsuperscript{210} In \textit{Camera Lucida} (1980), one of the most lovingly but also, in terms of the anticipation of death, ambiguously formulated art critical articulations on photography, French literary theorist Roland Barthes epitomises the camera as a ‘clock for seeing.’ He also refers to the audible noise produced by the mechanical shutter of traditional photography.\textsuperscript{211}

The transition between the time of photography and the time of film become represented in the invention of \textit{chronophotography} – literally the photography of time – by Eadweard Muybridge and Jules Marey (see also section 6.5 for an illustration of spatialised time). Marey’s obsessive engagement in capturing the motion of bodies in time was associated with the drive to understand the dimension of time inaccessible to the human eye – psychological time. But it was only after he came in contact with Edward Muybridge, his American contemporary who published a series of photographs of motion taken by multiple cameras in a French journal in 1878, that Marey developed the technique so crucial for the history of film and cinema. His dream of indefinite divisibility of a continuum pointed to the desire of lossless representation of time.\textsuperscript{212} In Bergsonian terms, these frozen instances would reduce movement and duration into immobilities criticised by him in the upcoming invention of cinematograph. Paradoxically, the obsession with instantaneity and the present in the photography of meticulously traced movement led to the desire for its archivability, hence the ‘becoming the past of the present.’\textsuperscript{213}

This atomisation of time rupturing its continuum became embodied in the materiality of film. The isolated frames of the filmstrip – the photograms – represent instances of time.\textsuperscript{214} The first cinematograph that was presented to the public by Lumières brothers in 1895 was based on the principle of chronophotographs, improved by the equidistant movement of the images through the projector thanks to perforations and a tooth–and-claw mechanism. This enabled the machine to reproduce movement creating an illusion of motion by projecting static photograms at a certain speed.

The basic rule of the perceived motion in cinema is based on the physiological concept of afterimage; the theory of persistence of image – the capacity of the retina to retain an impression of an object for a fraction of a second after it has disappeared – assumes that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{211} Ibid., 15.
\item \textsuperscript{212} Marey showed little interest in the synthesis of the movement produced by the cinematography. In fact, he would rearrange the images cut out of the strip of film to reassemble his fixed-plate chronophotography and rephotographed them. For him, that was an efficient way to produce the graph of time. Interestingly, his approach was taken up by Futurists, who by traditional, modernist artistic means were engaged in representation of time. On this matter, see Doane, \textit{The Emergence of Cinematic Time}, 34.
\item \textsuperscript{213} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{214} For an exploration of history in relation to film theory, history and textuality, see Philip Rosen, \textit{Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).
\end{itemize}
every subsequent photogram persists and blends with the former so that they produce an
illusion of motion. This persistent theory, it must be said, has been replaced by the cognitive
psychology theories based on the notion of the critical threshold beyond which the human
eye is incapable of perceiving difference.

The time of the film found its way in the philosophical consideration. In fact it was
Bergson who posed ontological questions in relation to cinematic time. This reconnects
the argument in section 6.4 and allows for a better understanding of the time of film for
its conservation. Most importantly for the following discussion of the time of Zen for Film,
however, it is crucial to investigate Bergson’s view on cinematic time. For Bergson, early
cinema became a legatee of homogenous, empty time, which, to reiterate, was a successor of the
genealogy of the mechanical clock, telegraph and railway. Bergson discusses the way in which
human intellect, in its mental faculty, perceives change or motion as an instance, in a single
image. In the series of frozen images, the ceaseless flux is being captured in snapshots; the
continual changes of form, the transition, are being frozen. This becomes manifest in the way
he describes the cinematograph. The ability (or disability) of human perception of movement
and duration in a series of instances – a kind of decomposition – lays the foundation for the
analogy between human perception and the cinematograph, which substitutes the fluidity of
motion for flickering images. Bergson used just this logic of cinematic apparatus to exercise
his time critique. The illusion of movement, following this logic, was located on the side of the
apparatus and was able to abstract a general movement. Rather than being real, the movement
consists of the accumulation of the transition between the states, so that the cinematic ‘real
time’ fails to be real just as the movement cannot be reconstituted out of immobilities. It must
be said, however, that this critique was built on an infant stage of cinema. Deleuze, providing in
his books Cinema I and Cinema II a profound analysis of the moving image in the last century,
criticised Bergson for this approach allegedly focused on the intermittent mechanics of the
apparatus rather than the perceptual continuity of the moving image. Deleuze discharged
this misrecognition of the cinematic capabilities of representation of duration as taken from
space in his claim that the continuity should be related to the spectator’s ability of perception
of intermediate image as a continuum, and, simultaneously, of the impossibility of seeing
singular photograms.

So how does this relate to Paik’s Zen for Film? What temporalities are imposed on
us regarding the confrontation with the artwork? Are we dealing here with a follow up of
instances, or rather with a continuous movement?

215 In the theory of colour, Goethe referred to the afterimages as ‘psychological colours.’ For a detailed
discussion of this phenomena, see Doane, The Emergence of Cinematic Time, 70; Kittler, Optical Media,
147.

The time of *Zen for Film* is, first of all, time processed by the machine – the cinematic apparatus – present in the movement of a filmstrip through its mechanics in a sequence of discrete images. It should have become tangible, the cinematic time, imprinted in instances of presents-that-have-been, but simultaneously are-yet-not. Yet there is something peculiar about this temporal relationship; it conveys a skewed message. The film leader is empty, the frames – the time frames – non-existent. Paik’s blank filmstrip is not, as it has often been asserted, an unexposed film. Rather, it is a clear film leader, conveying no message, no spatial intervals and no temporal record in a cinematic sense. On Paik’s film there is indeed nothing that has been stopped, no instances recorded, no photograms or any kind of pictorial presence. Ironically, this can only become revealed once the conversion of the traditional filmic logic is disclosed. Because there is a permanent lack of any motion that had to be resurrected in a continuous flow of frozen instances under stereoscopic illumination – the motion exists only in the machine pulling the transparent leader through its spools – the discussion on the reduction of movements and duration into immobilities might become subsumed. Bergson’s critical legacy concerning cinema as a substitution for the fluidity of real motion and illusion of ceaseless, durational flux seems to be suspended by Paik’s annihilating manoeuvre. The trace of traditional cinematic rhythm is still present in the blinking illumination of the projector, whereby the light ray addresses no rectangular frame form. If there are no stoppages, no time frames and singular instances, nothing to stumble upon while contemplating pure duration, *Zen for Film* becomes a subtle possibility for cinematic representation of duration. In these terms, Paik allegorises the temporal continuum on filmic medium and provides an ultimate token for a Deleuzian argument of cinema as continuity. Paradoxically, the non-content of the film is also, and even more so, a proof of the impossibility of representing pure duration.

If time is embalmed in photography and the filmic photogram, becoming an index, a record of a fraction of time, then *Zen for Film* clearly escapes this specific temporal presence. But what does it mean that Paik’s film has no relation to any recorded image, no reference carried within itself? This is crucial to understanding *Zen for Film* and the kind of temporality that it confronts us with. In his essay *Ontology* (1967) the French film critic and theorist André Bazin identifies the origins of art in the human drive to overcome death and defines photography as a successful preserving gesture against the destructive influences of the flow of time (confirmed in the replacement of the earlier death mask by a deathbed photograph, for instance). In Barthes’s *Camera Lucida* the presence of death is a recurring motif, inscribed to life by photography and hence overcoming the meditative function of religion and ritual. This is taken on by Laura Mulvey who, in her book *Death 24x a Second* (2006), adds new...
ways of conceptualising the relation of film to time. Following Godard’s conviction that a photography freezes the reality in its transition from animate to inanimate, from life to death, and film fulfils the conversion in reanimating the static frames, Mulvey proposes to define the cinema as a ‘death 24 times a second.’

If a frame is a static image and, of necessity, characterised by a deathly aspect, Paik’s empty leader escapes from this stasis into the realm of non-representability, distancing itself from the tradition of flicker film of this decade and its relation to stillness and movement, frame and the projector. Because there is no static frame, no image as a photogram whatsoever, the actuality of *Zen for Film* is always sustained. So Paik’s film also transcends the cinematic death drive, the 24-times-a-second moments of frozen temporalities, successful in circumventing the very medium condition on the slide through the cinematic performance.

This is not to say, however, that Paik’s work is unrelated to finitude (rather than death), which will, in effect, coincide with the trace. It should not escape our attention that there is another temporality that *Zen for Film* does not manage to escape. It crystallises gradually in the evidence of the mechanical impact of its running time – the intervals of projection. It is time persistently imprinting its traces on the sensible surface of the celluloid, and the time of the cyclical intervals of the projection running in an endless loop, apparently seamless. It is the feature that distinguishes analogue from digital – the accumulation of analogue traces on the celluloid leads to the obliteration of the content. Only that here, the trace itself, the index of obliteration, becomes the visual content. What does it mean to have all these traces on the film, in an ever-condensing manner of accumulation? Is time – the time of the machine – being not only inscribed on its surface, but also compressed and, in a way, concentrated? A trace left by a person – a line on the paper, for instance – has the ability to transcend an object to another realm of existence. In analogue film, this role is taken over by a machine. *Zen for Film* clearly exemplifies the mechanic inscription of time, the imprint of the mechanical activity of the apparatus on the transparent film leader that transcends it to another realm. Moreover, the aspect of exchangeability of the filmstrip suggests another form of circumventing the death drive – by opening up new possibilities of repeated time inscription. A new period of ‘usage’ is initiated with every exchange of the film leader, whereas the loop would succumb to the trace faster than a film played from a spool – a ‘linear’ version. From the point of view of the decision maker, it is interesting to look into the moment of the replacement of the film, dictated by the condition of its usage. Is there a moment when the

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film is sufficiently ‘used,’ ready to be replaced? When does the time imprint stop, or, when it is ‘completed’? To be sure, this is a matter of subjective judgement.

This accumulation of traces on the transparent filmstrip in *Zen for Film* takes us to another intriguing dimension, namely the relation between the imprint of time and the transparency of the film. The visible relationship between transparency and opacity is intriguing insofar as the former is commonly assigned a higher value than the latter. Transparency is a matter of judgement and may only be assessed in relation to a state of lesser or higher transparency. Here, the process of time imprinting its trace on the film leader signifies a gradual loss of transparency, leading ultimately to a state of opacity. One of the possible readings of this circumstance would suggest the idea of a criticism of transparency in Paik’s filmic endeavour. Transparency means the avoidance of alteration, change in response to the flux of time. It enables undistorted seeing. Transparent works are timeless, and the imprint of time, in whatever form it might take place, clearly complicates them. So the transparency, the revelation of the very transparent surface itself rendered in Paik’s film opaque is a question of representation revealing the reality of the medium. Alteration, the loss of transparency, and decay may themselves become highly aesthetic experiences, as has been demonstrated by Bill Morrisons’s film *Decasia* (2002), which addresses both the beauty of decay versus the deadly effects of time. Paik’s step to the side in the evolution of image culture, the maximum reduction in *Zen for Film*, a certain kind of conceptual erasure of pictorial strata, recalls Robert Rauschenberg’s iconic *Erased de Kooning Drawing* of 1953, where the unmaking of one work became simultaneously the creation of another (related to the trace of the removal of the trace). The unmaking would signify here the refusal of the narrative, and the creation, in a positivistic sense, of an added (rather than reduced) value through the accumulation of the traces of time and decay. *Zen for Film* allows for a different kind of contemplation of decay, creating a remarkable level of an aesthetic encounter. Indubitably, there is a positivism to the imprint of time in Paik’s *Zen for Film*, a positive value that inverts the relationship between transparency that enables seeing, to the lost of transparency endowing another quality to what is being seen (or to what is becoming less visible and more opaque). And rather than in an instant, this new dimension of seeing reveals itself in time, in duration.

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221 In a different way than Paik’s clear filmstrip, *Decasia* addresses the very process of change in an altered archival film footage. Evoking simultaneously positive (beauty of decay) and negative connotations (deadly effects of time), it elevates the commonly avoided effects of time to the essence of its spectacle.


223 The material (physical and chemical) change of the leader will occur independently from the imprint of trace, yet assuming that in *Zen for Films* operable condition its replacement overtakes the pace of material-specific decay, I have chosen not to address it here.
The cinematic time of Zen for Film involves necessarily the temporality of the viewer. This links us with the aspect of participation discussed in section 5.3 and the Duchampian credo that the spectator, through the act of interpretation, contributes to the work of art.\(^{224}\) The time of spectatorship in this context means the engagement of the viewer with what is being seen or not seen, depending on the level of this engagement. The intensity of it is strictly bound with the duration of the spectacle, which, as has been suggested, unfolds in time. The time of the spectatorship is the junction between the act of empathising with the work and the viewers’ own temporal condition. The viewer confronts the image and perceives the cinematic happening, divorced from the time of the outside moving tirelessly in an entropic expansion, independently from his/her perception and irrelevantly to his/her existence. Zen for Film becomes a kind of an ‘indifferent’ entropy, which may be compared with works of artists that address entropy in different ways, such as Dieter Roth’s organic assemblages or Eva Hesse’s unstable plastics. Here, the indifferent entropy reminds us of the temporality of the Zen, a non-quantifiable, non-directional, non-progressive movement.\(^{225}\) According to the British philosopher and Zen theorist Alan Watts, the course of time is the travelling of a wave on the ocean, of which the actual movement is the rhythm of ups and downs, whereas the directional movement is illusory.\(^{226}\) Time and space become integrated to ‘here-now,’ a living space-time, whereas the time refuses to be a quantifiable and punctuated unit, a linear progression through past, present and future. The Zen time is neither symmetrical nor reversible, neglecting the clock of natural science; Zen ‘takes time to be living.’\(^{227}\) The Zen understanding of time opposes the significance of the present that may only contain records.

Perhaps the last remark worth mentioning on the temporality of Paik’s filmic work might be directed to a broader context of the temporal perception of the medium’s physical presence. Paik’s Zen for Film, of necessity, requires a projector to be screened. In the days of the digital cloud, the ubiquitous presence of the web and the oversaturation with sophisticated display technologies, a number of contemporary artistic productions deliberately employ film projectors not only due to the necessity of the screening itself, but owing to their sculptural, if not audible, relevance. But yet the physicality of this apparatus carries with it another presence, one related to the past, according to the suggestion of the literary critic and philosopher Walter Benjamin: ‘The medium through which works of art continue to influence later ages is always

\(^{224}\) In his speech to the American Federation of Artists in 1957, Duchamp declared that ‘the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adding his (her) contribution to the creative act.’ Marcel Duchamp, “The Creative Act,” ARTnews 56 no. 3, May 1957. For a discussion on participation and interactivity, see Daniels, “Strategies of Interactivity.”


\(^{226}\) Ibid.

different from the one in which they affect their own age.”

Clattering mechanics, the light source, sometimes the flicker – it all evokes emotions, if not melancholy, it engages us in the act of remembrance following the reconstructive path of memory. Its deliberate choice incites the viewer to be removed from the present to the time when this particular display technique was used for film screenings, movie theatres, often hidden behind the curtain or concealed in a projection room. Today, often displayed centrally or, at the least, visibly, the filmic apparatus becomes a significant sculptural element in exhibitions and acquires a status different than the one initially intended.

During the Maciunas’ Fluxhall in 1964, Paik’s film was played from a device widely used in the 1960s, to mention only the films that Jud Yakult made of Paik’s early videos, and which also required this type of projection. The attention paid to it was no greater than that paid to DVD playback nowadays. The projector was, in a sense, to adapt Rosalind Krauss’ assertion, in a kind of ‘premedium condition,’ a medium which of necessity is there, is at hand, and is being used, precisely because at that particular moment in the evolution of technologies, there was no other choice than the choice of a film projector to project a filmic work (comparable nowadays with the ubiquitous use of a digital projector and digital image in gallery rooms). The presence of a projector in Paik’s work did not result from his attraction to the outmoded forms of the early techniques of the cinema described by Krauss in relation to Marcel Broodthartaers’ filmic work A Voyage on the North Sea (1974) in which the filmic medium in its obsolescence demonstrates a redemptive quality. Rather, it might be argued, the materiality of the film projection was embedded in technological relations of its own time.

After the advent of new, digital media, the way in which filmic projections and diverse analogue techniques are perceived and implemented in artistic practice has undoubtedly changed. The machines and the medium are endowed with their pastness, with the melancholy directed towards times that once were but are no more. As I pointed out, Paik’s works are often understood as ‘possibilities of experience,’ rather than ‘objects.’ In this sense, and in consideration of the temporal condition, the possibility of experience of Zen for Film acquires another meaning – the meaning of the temporal shift between the time of its inception and the presence apparent in the archaeological touch of the apparatus in our present. In changing

228 ‘… Moreover, in those later times its impact on older works constantly changes, too. Nevertheless, this medium is always relatively fainter than what influenced contemporaries at the time it was created.’ Walter Benjamin, “The Medium through Which Works of Art Continue to Influence Later Ages,” in Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings Vol.1, 1913–1926, eds. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2002), 235.


its valency, meaning and potential in relation to the development of other media, Paik’s work becomes both temporal and historical.

For conservation, it is first necessary to understand the logic of *Zen for Film* in order to draw conclusions concerning its conservability. Rather than conserve the film leader in order to maintain its projection in the form in which it existed in Paik’s moment, it is a question of the repeated process of its deterioration and replacement. We should therefore speak of the unconservability of *Zen for Film*’s leader rather than its conservability in the material sense. If we were to stop the projection in order to prevent gradual damage, there would be nothing to experience. Showing a new leader provides the experience of the work for the viewer. This recalls the association with Rauschenberg’s *White Paintings*, which have to be repainted in order to be experienced (see section 4.2), and in the case of which, allowing for conservability of the material would signify an ‘unconservability’ of the experience, as it were. In this perpetuity of new beginnings, both *Zen for Film* and *White Paintings*, paradoxically ‘return’ to some kind of intended form. But can one speak of conservation, in that sense, at all?

Let us look one last time at *Zen for Film*, where, in this context, the question still remains whether the presence of a projector can be guaranteed for the future. Perhaps, just as the ‘original’ film spool that has been exhibited in a vitrine next to the projection, the deactivation of *Zen for Film*’s projector will come with its obsolescence and unavailability. Yet the experience of both the filmic time and spectatorial experience of the filmic flow would herewith be extinguished. There is one more conclusion that we may draw on the grounds of this discussion. The medium is always temporally referential, meaning that the distance to its original implementation in an artwork increases the awareness of its historical condition, and that in Paik’s film projection, remediation will always involve a change – either a translation or a suppression – of its characteristic temporality.231

### 7.3 Television and Video Time

Paik himself instigated the transition from film to video. Here, *Zen for Film* might be seen as being on the cusp of premedium and obsolete medium. The new medium of video (and television) offered artists a more direct and immediate effect than film. It should not be left unmentioned that video also changed the way in which film operated – at the time of the wide availability of video associated with low costs of production, film became perhaps a historically sophisticated, yet, at the same time, economically less appreciated technology.232

The concept of remediation put forward by David Bolter and Richard Grusin may be helpful

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231 For a discussion on temporal translation of media, see section 7.4; for a suppression of temporality in technological ruins, see section 7.5.

232 “Roundtable on Digital Experimental Filmmaking.”
in understanding this transition. Leaning on McLuhan’s assumption that “the content” of any medium is always another medium, remediation – a term coined to complicate the notion of ‘repurposing’ – assumes that new media follow the logic of old media in presenting themselves as improved versions of other media. The cultural work of new media is never isolated from the social and economic context. The particularity of new media lies precisely in the ways in which older media are refashioned and how older media refashion themselves to answer the challenges of new media.

Before discussing video, I will first offer some insights into the characteristics of television, and there are two reasons for this. First, the immediacy of the technical manipulation of TV sets was crucial for Paik’s first solo exhibition in Wuppertal and which gave direction to subsequent developments. Second, as an electronic medium, video shares technical characteristics with television. It is also interesting to problematise Paik’s discussed works such as *Zen for TV* or *Moon is the Oldest TV* from the perspective of remediation. Whereas the former become a certain kind of remediated concept of a chance event, the latter exemplifies how a manipulation undergoes transition to the new medium video. Paradoxically, and as a proof of the possibility of a non-chronological remediation, in Jud Yakult and Paik’s *Electronic Moon No. 2* (1966–69) Paik’s manipulation of *Moon is the Oldest TV* is transferred to 16mm film. In a remarkable mode of temporal translation, inverting the genealogy of medium, the encoded visualisation became again a photogram. To reiterate, the temporal structure of film is different from video and television. In *Moon is the Oldest TV*, a certain punctual immediacy of electronic image that emerges in response to the mechanical intervention in deflection circuit becomes repeatable, playable and linear when recorded on video. In order to understand the specific temporalities that are involved in these processes, I will now briefly explain how they come into existence.


234 ‘The content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the telegraph. … For the “message” of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs. The railway did not introduce movement or transportation or wheel or road into human society, but it accelerated and enlarged the scale of previous human functions, creating totally new kinds of cities and new kinds of work and leisure. This happened whether the railway functioned in a tropical or a northern environment, and is quite independent of the freight or content of the railway medium. The airplane, on the other hand, by accelerating the rate of transportation, tends to dissolve the railway form of city, politics, and association, quite independently of what the airplane is used for’ Marshal McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York, Signet, 1964), 23-35 and 63-67. Bolter and Grusin see in McLuhan’s proposition more complex kind of ‘borrowing’ in which one medium is itself incorporated or represented in another medium.’ Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*.

235 Ibid., 15.

236 Ibid.

237 This strategy as a kind of subversion of artistic structures was characteristic of Fluxus. In Vostell’s Fluxus Films (*Sun in Your Head*, Fluxfilm No. 23, 1963) the 8mm film camera is directed to film a videotaped material from television programs. Michael Rush, *Video*, 69.
Television is in strict opposition to film and photography, with their discrete sequence of images and analogy to nature. In his brilliantly formulated essay Video, Flows and Real Time (2007) the sociologist and philosopher Maurizio Lazzarato posits:

Photography is already a technology that crystallises time because the image is bound to the shutter speed and, therefore, to the ability to capture time. It registers a development by fixing it. Film makes the still image run, thus causing the ‘illusion’ of movement (according to Bergson’s definition). Yet video technology captures movement itself: not something moving in space, but the ‘pure oscillations’ of light.

Television is, to the same extent as video, distinct from the sequential division of time in frames; it offers a direct transmission by the way of disintegration of forms into raster elements transmitted point by point. In line with Kittler’s assumption that all media were invented in response to military needs, the cultural theorist Paul Virilio ascribes the invention of television to the war industry, claiming that, as a ‘media of accidents,’ it cannot be used as art. This contradicts the optimistic (and influential for Paik) vision of McLuhan, who saw in television an emerging art form. McLuhan’s vision of a mythical and integral world connected through satellite medium was expressed in an idea of a global theatre – a further development of the former notion of global village – which aimed at turning the world into a programmed theatre.

Nonetheless, despite their technological differences, it is rather difficult to strictly draw a line between television and video as artistic media as the latter often used television to be transmitted, and television (broadcasts or manipulation), just as well, could be transferred to video. The prophecy that television would not prove to become an artistic medium failed. The Fernsehergalerie Schum (Television Gallery Schum) established in Germany by Gerry Schum in 1967–70 was successful in transmitting and ‘communicating’ art around 1970 on the official broadcast of Deutsche Fernsehen.

Paik’s manipulation of the electronic vision played with the effect of immediacy in many ways. For instance, his Magnet TV allowed the viewer direct interaction with the flow.

238 The invention of television is attributed to the young German physics student Paul Nipkow and dated 1883. Kittler, Optical Media, 209.
243 For example, Paul Garrin recalls recording Paik’s Moon is the Oldest TV on videotape. Garrin, discussion.
of electrons in the tube. A novelty in its time, such interactions engaged the viewer in the otherwise obscure technological interiors of monitors in a rather immediate way. This might be seen as an intervention in the specific temporality of the medium expressed in the image instantaneously viewable on the screen. It must be mentioned, however that, at the same time, other artists implemented TV monitors as a medium. 244 For instance, rather than playing with the modulation of vision, a number of Vostell’s sculptural television objects such as Concrete TV Paris (1974–81, Fig. 7.1) were embedded in concrete, implying a certain type of finitude (and impossibility of a non-invasive migration).

Yet Paik’s manipulated televisions reveal something more than the sheer modification of an image. Unlike a video that can be migrated and re-played, their temporality, dependent on the technology used (cathode ray tube) and moment in time (1960s) are barely transferable to present conditions. In 1963, the TV set already mentioned, soon to become Zen for TV, was transferring an image of the only available TV broadcast in Germany while it collapsed into a line (see section 5.2). Obviously the analogue broadcast of the 1960s does not match the digital broadcast of today (content or technology-wise) and, as far as I am aware, there have been no attempts to recover Zen for TV’s authentic (tele)vision of that time. This leads to the assumption that the authentic temporal translation of Zen for TV is thus impossible. Unless unleashed from its specific temporality – as the MTV video wall is in the project Something Pacific addressed in the subsequent section – the self-enclosed logic of TV time is by its nature temporally fixed.

It has already been argued that from a technological standpoint, video operates on different mechanisms than film and, as an electronic medium, it shares its technical characteristics with television. Crucial for the definition of the syntax of the image, the technology of a video signal displayed on a monitor is determined by the technology of transmitted signals. 245 In contrast to the singular image frame of a film, two interlocked half images staggered in time create what is seen as a constant image on the screen. The vidicon, a photosensitive coating able to register the pattern of light and dark is scanned by an electron beam and subsequently creates a video signal. The video information is encoded in the scanning lines from left to right. The electronic signal runs vertically and horizontally constructing and deconstructing the image in the camera and on the screen synchronously. This technological capacity of video is crucial to the temporal practices of video artists. One of the greatest advantages of the medium was just this possibility of translation of events happening in time into an encoded system of data and the ability to repeatedly replay it, creating a temporal loop of sorts.

244 Tom Weselman, Günther Uecker, César, Isidore Isou, Akrt Gerstener, to name but a few. Daniels, “Television – Art or Anti-Art?”
The emergence of the first artistic video has changed the way in which both the artist and the viewer encountered the temporal dimension. With the implementation of the first half-inch video cameras both the image and time became easily – and later economically – recordable, manipulable and viewable shortly after the recording. ‘I think that was a revolution in terms of access’ maintains the experimental documentary filmmaker Lynn Sachs. She continues:

Because of its accessibility, more people could enjoy the freedom of using the new media for creative thinking. People started to believe you could be a ‘filmmaker’ without being a ‘director,’ and that making a film could be an autonomous act from start to finish, as painting and writing are.246

To experiment with motion picture there was now no need to carry a heavy film or television camera. The long waiting times for film processing and related high costs vanished with the introduction of Sony’s Portapak that seemed to be invented specifically for the needs of artists. The first artistic implementation of video was famously ascribed to Paik.247 The reason for this is lapidary – his first motive taped with a portable video camera acquired with the Rockefeller Foundation grant was the Pope visiting New York in October 1965. Later that day, Paik played his recorded material during an event at Café au GoGo. And although the technological video (art) history commenced in 1965, it remains unclear whether the famous recording was made factually using Sony’s Portapak. In his seminal publication Zur Geschichte des Videorecorders (1986), the German media theorist Siegfried Zielinski maintains that the legendary Portapak, the first portable half-inch unit produced by Sony became available in Japan and the United States only in 1967.248 This implies that the Pope must have been filmed with a different, since forgotten, half-inch device.249

The temporal immediacy – the instant feedback – that according to Krauss differentiates video from other visual art and that became important in the artistic

246 “Roundtable on Digital Experimental Filmmaking.”
247 Paik went over to history as a ‘patriarchal male figure preoccupied with religious context.’ Rosler, Video, 45. Paik was not the only one experimenting with video at that time. Andy Warhol, for instance, undertook a number of experiments with video equipment more exquisite and hardly affordable technologies.
248 Zielinski, Zur Geschichte des Videorecorders, 155. In opposition, Michael Rush in his monograph Video Art indicates that Paik’s recording of the Pope was carried out using Portapak. Rush, Video Art, 213.
249 Christoph Blase (art journalist and founder of the Laboratory for Antiquated Video Systems, ZKM) suggests that Paik must have used Sony TCV-2010 that could be connected to a 110 V in a cab. He could have shown the video directly thereafter pulling out the little screen of the 35 kg device. Christoph Blase, “ Willkommen im Maschinen-Labyrinth: Vom Bandlauf der Videoformate zwischen 1960 und 1980,” in Record Again!: 40 Jahre Videokunst.de Teil 2, eds. Christoph Blase and Peter Weibel (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2010), 329-340. German video artists waited until 1969 when Grundig and Phillips launched their portable half-inch appliances, although it is known that Grundig completed the first prototype already in 1965. Rudolf Frieling, “VT - TV – The Beginnings of Video Art,” in Medien Kunst Interaktion – die 60er und 70er Jahre in Deutschland, eds. Rudolf Frieling and Dieter Daniels (Vienna: Springer, 1997), 122–129.
The implementation of the medium in the 1970s preoccupied Paik in depth. The closed-circuit installation series emerged in the 1960s based on a Buddha statue gazing at his own image on the screen presents the viewer with a new presence – simultaneity – approximating real time and making it tangible. For Paik, ‘video is time’ meaning that the dispositive of video technology ‘imitates’ the relationship between the different temporalities involved. Lazzarato compares the video machine to a brain, translating movements that are not perceivable in our categories of space and time into movements that can be perceived. His assumptions are based on Paik’s interpretation of video based on the translation of spatial information into signals thus allowing us to enter the temporal dimension.

Paik was convinced of the historical necessity of the electronic television that found expression in a manifesto entitled Electronic Video Recorder (1965, disseminated at the same time as the first screening at Café au GoGo). In the manifesto he states:

> It is the historical necessity, if there is a historical necessity in history, that a new decade of electronic television should follow to the past decade of electronic music. … Someday artists will work with capacitors, resistors and semi- conductors as they work today with brushes, violins and junk.

In the same manner of comparing electronic arts with traditional painting, Paik describes his next invention as very much related to the temporal immediacy of image transmission. In relation to the video synthesiser developed with the Japanese engineer Shuya Abe in 1970, and which enabled an instantaneous transmission and decomposition of images from seven inputs at the same time, Paik posited: “This will enable us to shape the TV screen canvas as precisely as Leonardo, as freely as Picasso, as colourfully as Renoir, as profoundly as Mondrian, as violently as Pollock and as lyrically as Jasper Jones.” Initially, the video synthesiser was based on an audio synthesiser and leaned on the logic of musical performance. It enabled a live transmission of the mixed image: ‘One simply plays it and one immediately sees the effect’ contended Paik. The WGBH live broadcast Video Commune broadcast in the summer of 1970 enabled passers-by to take part in the four-hour-long performance through spontaneous interaction with the synthesiser. The video synthesizer may be seen as acting in the realm of temporal freedom, with the ability to mix the input as long as it responds to its analogue...

251 Lazzarato, “Video, Flows and Real Time.”
255 ‘Man spielt einfach und man sieht den Effekt.’ Ibid.
build-up. Upon closer look, however, this freedom may become elusive. In the time of digital techniques and image processing, can this ground-breaking technology of the 1970s equipped with new content still represent what it once was?256

7.4 Conservation as Temporal Translation and Temporal Forms of Artworks

As I have shown, the temporalities involved in media have an impact not only on their behaviour, but also on ways in which they are perceived and presented. More importantly, conservators engaged with these media have to understand and take into account their complex, temporal logic. Remediation as a sort of continuation of the work may only be legitimated if the temporality of the ‘conservation object’ is sufficiently taken account of. From this perspective, it may be agreed to consider conservation as an intervention in the temporal structure of works of art processing time. A double progression of this proposition results from the specific internal temporality of the media on the one hand and, on the other, from conservation defined as a process paramountly engaged with time.

A further consequence of the acknowledgement of temporalities internal to film, television and video – of necessity limited in this thesis to media implemented for Paik’s artistic purposes – may allow us to define these media by their temporality. Consequently, if conservation could be defined as a temporal intervention in media intrinsically incorporating time, it may further be suggested that it is a temporal translation of these art forms, best observable in the processes of migration (Arche Noah’s playback equipment), emulation (Zen for TV’s CRT tube replacement in the autographed casing) and reinterpretation (Zen for Film manipulation at the Tate Liverpool). Since translation is a mode – paraphrasing Benjamin – one has to return to the ‘original’ in order to comprehend it and prove its translatability, in other words to prove whether the nature of the work lends itself to translation, and perhaps even

256 Similarly, and related to the temporal immediacy, Random Access exemplifies how Paik seeks to overcome the limitation of the access to auditory information encoded on a tape. Yet at the time of CDs, DVDs and MP3-based technologies and other formats of digital data encoding, the time-based character of the earlier works is conquered. In a later text Paik notices himself that the development of a videodisc (laser disc) already helped in overcoming the linearity of a videotape. Nam June Paik, “Artificial Intelligence vs Artificial Metabolism,” in Nam June Paik: Fluxus/Video, ed. Wulf Herzogenrath and Sabine Maria Schmidt (Verlag De Buchhandlung Walter, 2000), 252-253.
calls for it. Thus, it may be said that translation, or remediation, may already be inherent in the work’s nature. This implies that there can be media or elements of media that do not lend themselves to translation. Zen for TV’s collapsed image exemplifies the impossibility of temporal translation with regard to the broadcast of the 1960s that it transmitted in the exhibition in Wuppertal. To recall the discussion of the autographic moment (section 3.5), within the current conservation culture, the temporal translation would not be possible in the case of elements that bear a trace of the artist’s hand or signature (the story of Canopus). From a broader perspective, we may question whether the temporal translation of the participatory art and the novel media of the 1960s and 70s would succeed in present times. This recalls Dipert’s assertion that the higher intentionality may relate to the impact of a medium as a novelty – its Wirkung – rather than the concern about the mere means, a fetish (see section 3.4). Certainly, such translation will necessarily transform, since we transform what we inherit, according to Lowethal (see section 6.4).

Perhaps one last remark on a temporal view of media should be devoted to its origins that somewhat echo Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s division between spatial and temporal art and its (belated) critique in media and art theories. Lessing’s distinction between painting and visual art on the one hand and poetry and literature as time-art on the other was contested by McLuhan who posited that electronic media conflate space and time. In his book Gutenberg Galaxy (1962), McLuhan argues for the necessity of understanding media in terms of ‘space-time.’ There is a consequence that could be drawn from these assertions. I suggest that, like temporal art, in its response to the flux of time, ‘spatial art’ may be also viewed as temporal, yet slower rather than fast. This proposition aims at defining the medium by its temporality

257 ‘Translation is a mode. To comprehend it as a mode one must go back to the original, for that it contains the law governing the translation: its translatability. … Does its nature lend itself to translation and, therefore, in view of the significance of the mode, call for it? … Translatability is an essential quality of certain works, which is not to say that it is essential that they be translated; it means rather that a specific significance inherent in the original manifest itself in its translatability.’ Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator,” in The Translation Studies Reader Lawrence, ed. Venuti, (London: Routledge, 2000), 76. Benjamin’s complex thought goes far beyond my usage in this thesis; yet the idea of translation in the context of conservation and the comparison of literary translation within the conservation of media offers an interesting field of enquiry, already hinted upon in conservation literature. For this matter, see Jonathan Rée, “Auto-Icons,” in Conservation: Principles, Dilemmas and Uncomfortable Truths, eds. Alison Richmond and Alison Bracker (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2009), 2.


259 Lessing’s division between spatial and temporal art remained not uncomplicated. McLuhan questioned it as soon as he became aware of Einsteinian physics. His concept of writing as a spatialisation of speech complicates Lessing’s notion of the temporal aspect of poetry. Richard Cavel, McLuhan in Space: A Cultural Geography (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 118.

260 Ibid. It is interesting, however, that Paik himself was interested in Lessing’s distinction: “The more I work with Video, the more I think aboutLessing’s distinction of Space art and Time art. … Video is preemptive. If you are watching NBC, you cannot watch CBS . . . or if you are watching Ira Schneider, you are not watching Frank Gillette (or vice versa).” Paik, “Input-Time and Out-Put Time.”

261 For ‘objects as slow events’ see Wharton, “Heritage Conservation as a Cultural Work,” 18.
with implication reaching beyond electronic and technology-based art. The much-referred to notion of ‘time-based art’ could thus encompass both the media incorporating and processing time and traditional media. Certainly, asserting that painting and sculpture responds slower to time may be contested by the argument that change in painting or sculpture may also be rapid and that the assessment of the pace of change is a matter of interpretation and depends on context. However, one may agree that if a comparison between a traditional painting and a video artwork were to be made, would the pace of change in the playback apparatus, data format and display technology not overtake the pace of change in a traditional, painted medium?

Perhaps a further specification of the involvement of media in time would be helpful. I propose that artworks may actively and passively respond to time. The passive response to time signifies a slower change that agrees with decay and degradation (see section 7.7). Art that responds to time faster would be actively involved with time by means of processing it and this would be intrinsic to film, video, TV artworks and multimedia. This kind of art may nevertheless involve the characteristic of slower art that passively responds to time reflected in the degradation, decay and ageing of their physical materials.

I believe that the passive response to time in painting and sculpture and its slower change might also have contributed to the construction of the paradox of reversibility or of ‘arresting’ time (see section 6.2). Unlike media artworks that respond to time faster, the range of time with which conservation of traditional painting or sculpture used to be preoccupied might have reached far beyond any provable dimension – works might have stayed ‘conserved’ for forty or fifty years after the intervention escaping the horizon of a professional activity of one generation of conservators. This is also one of the reasons why time has not been radicalised by traditional conservation. In the conservation of media works of art and installations incorporating media, the pace of change resulting in the many variants of changeability (see chapter 5) evokes a deeper contention with time, questioning the ruling conventions of understanding time and change (see chapter 6). These works, I suggest, not only allow us to scrutinise and radicalise the time for conservation, but also provoke the rethinking of traditional art – as changeable, more slowly.

It is thus no more a question of how can we conceive of and conserve works on the basis of what we know about conventional art and its conservation, but rather how can we understand and maintain traditional artworks through the scope of temporal awareness derived from media artworks. In other words, the understanding of time from media artworks alters the way in which the conservation of traditional art may be approached by shifting its imperative to the acceptance of change.
7.5 Transcending Obsolescence? The Paradox of Ruins

One of the most fascinating examples of how media art and multimedia installations can not only process time but also transform it is revealed in relation to technological ruins. In this short digression towards things deprived of their original function as the result of decay and obsolescence I will show how the transfer between artworks actively engaged with time to those passively engaged with time may take place, how the time of the work coincides with the time of the outside (anticipating section 7.7) and, furthermore, how different temporalities merge with one another evoking a presence of yet another temporality, a temporality of a suppressed activity and sustained stasis – a form of disabled technological presence. A curiosity of sorts, taking into account the fact that technology is obviously meant to perform a dynamic function, producing an image, an audio signal and various information. The installations I will address here distinguish themselves from one another when considering their ontological strata, but meet again in the shared fate of their deactivation, being no longer producers but worn-out components of an earlier activity. Most importantly, however, they inherit a thought that adheres closer to this thesis than might have appeared – the thought of conservation.

*Rembrandt Automatic* (Fig. 7.2), the deactivated TV set already mentioned was endowed with a sculptural presence ever more reinforced by its defect. Interestingly, while some sources describe the aura of the light spread on the floor during the Parnass Gallery show, others maintain that the monitor was dark. When experienced nowadays, its dysfunction directs the attention of the viewer to the stillness of the casing, to a certain form of absence. What do we see here? Is it intended? What would we see if the screen had been turned towards us? This concealment of the eventuality of there being an image transfers perception into pure speculation, since what is there is a monumental casing, turned off and disabled in a double sense. It is disabled as a technical device in its switched-off condition, and disabled as an appliance presenting us, if properly positioned, with the possibility of an image – an electronic window. The active time of the medium in *Rembrandt Automatic* ceased to exist; what remained is a technological ruin governed by time that agrees with decay and alteration intrinsic to all artefacts. Would *Rembrandt* in this context mean more than just a brand?

The ruin represents transience and breakage and bears the traces of time as a historical palimpsest. Technological ruins may bear analogy with the classical ruin, depicted often symbolically as a fleeting representation of eternity. Yet technological ruin seems to contain the idea of what the artist Robert Smithson names the ‘ruin in reverse,’ it becomes...
a ruin before it is assembled. New ruins give a more brutal impression than classical ones.\textsuperscript{264} In the technological ruin, the malfunction brings awareness to things – of their assemblages of technical parts and careful fitting.\textsuperscript{265} Rembrandt Automatic’s bygone glory reminds us of the attempt of technology to overcome its \textit{incompatibility with time}. No longer strained by the obligation to transmit, the TV set sustains itself in its enclosed temporality preserving an image of a past.

\textit{Something Pacific} (1986) is Paik’s first outdoor installation, conceived for the Stuart Collection located at the campus of the University of California San Diego (Figs. 7.3 and 7.4). Outdoors the installation features a number of ensembles including statues of Buddha and (ruined) TV sets embedded in the landscape, a Watchman topped with a statue of Rodin’s \textit{Thinker}, and a \textit{TV Graveyard} – a pile of electronic rubbish thrown out of one of the windows of the Media Center.\textsuperscript{266} Indoors Paik set up a video wall involving some 36 monitors displaying simultaneously in addition to one of Paik’s videotapes of a live feed of MTV (Fig. 7.5). The viewer could actively manipulate a part of the monitors using a Fairlight synthesiser. The scattered ruins in the grass of the campus – skeletal remains returned to nature – were conceived to contrast the interactive installation bound to the latest craze in broadcast television and dependent on the audience’s active participation. This work raises a number of interesting questions. As years passed, the synthesiser had to be repaired; but can we simply ‘allow the grass to continue growing’ over the video wall? And even if the characteristic silvery Samsung monitors – already a later replacement approved by the artist – could be obtained on the second-hand market and piled up in storage guaranteeing the initial look of the installation for the next decade or two, should the original live feed of MTV be displayed in the form of a recording from the 1980s? Or should the feed reflect the rather different content of the network today?

\textsuperscript{264} This was central for Albert Speer’s \textit{Theory of Ruin Value} (Ruinentheoriewert, 1969) disfavoured due to its political engagement in national socialism. Interestingly, Speer’s idea assumed building the Third Reich’s architecture in such a way that the ruins would be aesthetically pleasing to the viewer in thousands of years yet to come. See also Mats Burström, “Creative Confusion,” in \textit{Rethinking Time: Essays on History, Memory and Representation}, eds. Hans Ruin and Andrus Er (Södertörn Högskola: Södertörn Philosophical Studies 9, 2011), 119-128.


\textsuperscript{266} As George Kubler puts it, once something is discarded it becomes a litter or scrap and thus introduces a reversal of values (George Kubler, \textit{The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things} (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008 (1962))). On Paik’s technological graveyard the value undergoes a double reversal – the equipment becomes discarded and becomes a scarp; it is re-evaluated in the form of an artwork. For conservation this seems to have crucial consequences: should the ‘scarp value’ prevail over the ‘art value’? For a discussion on values, see Riegl, “The Modern Cult of Monuments.”
To a degree, in a later interview Paik releases us from this problem. In response to whether, in the case of a breakage, an attempt should be made to replace the Fairlight synthesiser by a similar model maintaining the state of technology of 1985–86, Paik asserts:

No, I think it should be made better. Every young kid expects more now from media. So they should go with the progress of industry. … It’s like a symphony. When you write a symphony each new generation comes along and changes it and that way it becomes better and better. We got Ormandy, and Toscanani, and they all make good work. They all make the conductor’s work. Curators make good work now.\(^\text{267}\)

If Paik’s attitude in response to technological progress and change should be decisive about upgrading the broadcast, the solution to our problem comes rather easily. Yet if intentionality were to be understood relationally and the historic value of the ensemble were to be of greater importance in making a decision, the video wall would present us with a dilemma. The process of emulation or the migration of an installation’s visible elements must always involve equilibrium between new and old components, and consider the meaning of the initial arrangement.

On *Something Pacific*’s technological yard, time is experienced in a remarkably transformed and ‘prolonged’ way. The device that commonly serves to actively manipulate the viewer’s perception of time, transmitting signals in real time and/or in delay, giving the possibility to rewind, fast forward or stop the flow of audiovisual output, is disabled here. The stasis speaks for another temporal presence; it is a conservation of dynamic time into a static one, a conservation of the technologic flow of temporalities into the movement of all things that decay in a more linear way, so to speak. So the technological apparatus becomes another identity, one of a more static object passively responding to time (see section 7.4), a thing that might or might not be conserved in terms of the traditional conservation of non-technological artefacts. The problems related to the performing elements of technological devices ceased to exist; what is there is a TV set or a Watchman, in their thingly presentness of plastic casings and glazings, buttons, grids and gitters, all so prone to weather conditions that it evokes a certain anxiety. The sun, its UV rays, the rain, air pollution, groundwater and salts, insects, worms, and – not least – the people (their dogs, moods and lawn mowers), a condition as distant from an optimal museum protective casket as one can possibly imagine. A truly superb joke of the video master – this confrontation in which we inevitably lose. Yet this rather pessimistic vision unveils an undertone of hope. And it sounds on the string of a peculiar preservation idea entailed in these deactivated technological elements. By underlining their static status, in these artworks, Paik transcends time in a double meaning:

\(^{267}\) Nam June Paik and Joan Simon, “Interview Nam June Paik,” in *Landmarks: Sculpture Commissions for the Stuart Collection at the University of California San Diego*, ed. Mary Livingstone Beebe et al. (New York: Rizzoli, 2001), 115.
time has been formerly transformed due to the inherent logic of the initially functioning
devices and transcended again by their deactivation. The former activeness of the devices
exists only in the sphere of the viewers’ unconscious or tacit knowledge – a TV obviously
serves to transform visual impulses – so the ensemble is necessarily associated with lacking
electronic vision paired with a peculiar displacement in the yard’s nature. The latter together
with the double temporal flip mastered by Paik creates a sculptural graveyard of sorts, which
escaped the fate of technological obsolescence. In common parlance, in its material form, it
has thus, one could agree, a better chance for ‘eternity’ than it would have had in its original,
active incarnation.268

In its own sense of time, the ruin presents us with a paradox. The concept of the
 technological ruin exists somewhere in the realm of a static object, but a static object that once
experienced its own activity.269 In this sense, might time then become a memory of the static
object? What does it mean then to remake a ruin? Can a ruin be ‘ruined’?

The grounds of the UC San Diego campus deliver a very interesting test for
conservation as a process intervening in time. The sculptures in the yard are decaying and
stakeholders prompted second-hand market research to retrieve equipment matching the
casings of Paik’s ensemble.270 If the TV casings were to be replaced, the time of Something
Pacific would be ‘rewound’ for a number of years until these casings equally fall victim to
atmospheric conditions. To the yard, the time is anything but merciful. Should the ruins be
left to their fate? Should we succumb to the lure of decay and prevent ‘lifting their timeworn
remains out of their time’?271 Are we, as conservators, enemies of ruins or, rather, ruination?272

Discussing the archaeological approach to ruins the Finno-Swedish author Göran Schildt
adopts a radical perspective:

268 In this context, a digression on technological obsolescence opening up new horizons in the present, the
art critic and historian Michael Newman contends: ‘What happens when the analogue technologies of
memory are themselves left behind by the forward march of progress? This concerns not only the obsolete
object, which may harbour an unrealised, even explosive, potential – the chance encounter for which the
Surrealists hoped as they wandered the Paris flea markets. It also concerns the very technological medium
of memory that is capable of transforming the modality of the past from a bygone actuality to something
that has the potential to open up another future in the present. While the relation to the past considered as
information is a matter of knowledge, the relation to it as trace is that of witness: it concerns us.’ Michael
Newman, "Analogue, Chance and Memory," in Tacita Dean: Film, ed. Nicholas Cullinan (London: Tate

269 I have explored the problem of technological ruin in Hanna Hölling, “Monitor’s Matters,” in Simon Denny,

270 Mathieu Gregoire (project manager Stuart Collection), in discussion with the author, May 2011.

Burström, “Creative Confusion,” 121.

272 Göran Schildt ascribes this attitude to the archaeological approach that acknowledges historical values
in ruins and by all means tries to conserve them, even if this means obliterating other material evidence
from the excavation. Ibid. The acknowledgement of the historical conditions of objects, which laid much
of the foundation for conservation with respect to honouring the effects of time, may be seen in Ruskin’s
From … poetic or ontological [perspective] all conservation is a loss because it deprives the ruin of its essential quality: its relation to time. Can anything give us a more vivid understanding of time’s exceptional dimension, and of our own place in this context than such flotsam and jetsam?273

Interestingly, one of the Abschattungen of the technological ruins lies in the incredibility of its very being: unlike classical ruins, and nonetheless the piled graveyards of electronic dust polluting the earth in some far and too-distant-to-be-true country, technology seems to be too young to attract us with this decaying facet.274 The conservation of ruins contradicts their nature – as something being about decay, degradation and ageing. The time intervention in the form of a replacement is a helpless gesture against the time working on the surfaces and structures of TV bodies. If the graveyard was conceived as something to awaken memories and thoughts, and to immerse the viewer in this psychedelic image of technology gradually surrounding itself to entropy, an intervention in this process is essentially misplaced. Yet if an intervention in time – a replacement – allows a prolongation of the work’s experience, it lies in the nature of the conservator to feel tempted to act.

To resume, the technological ruins discussed here exemplify the transition between the active and passive engagement with time. The transfer takes place precisely between the former functions of an artwork’s elements as equipment that processes time to something that is solely processed by time and thus responds to the passage of time in the conventional meaning of the word and similarly to traditional artworks. Furthermore, ruins, and in particular technological ruins, have an exceptional ability to transform time. As I have shown, this temporal transformation may be accomplished by the simple gesture of deactivation, amounting to opening another temporality of a sculptural, static object subscribed to its own temporal reasoning. The sense of duration that is being introduced by this gesture is distinct from the polychronic installations and no doubt from a temporal complexity of a multimedia installation. This is owing to the fact that, as I suggested, each medium has its own intrinsic temporality by which it might be defined. This temporality may become complicated by conservation’s attempt to arrest time or to ‘reverse’ its passage. Similarly to Zen for Film’s leader, yet at the level of sculptural objects, the replaceability of ruins prompted by the collection challenges conservation’s attitude towards values attached to an artwork’s material evidence.

7.6 The Many Times of an Object

The technological ruins that already presupposed the divergence of temporalities in the object offer a convenient moment to set off on a crucial point in this argument, namely the temporal diversity of artworks and the dialectic of inner and outer time. This section builds upon the idea of heterotemporalities derived from Bergsonian theory (see section 6.4). Let us shortly recall Bergson's philosophical project. Bergsonian \textit{durée} is a time of heterogeneity, ‘succession without distinction,’ multiplicity but not a sum; the heterogeneity of time presumes a temporal, nonidentical plurality and nonnumerical multiplicity, and the co-existence of the past in the present, along with the anticipation of the future. On these grounds, Bergsonian theory serves my argument in introducing a heterotemporal possibility for the existence of time. This is confirmed by the Bengali historian Dipesh Chakrabarty who purports that the present is a containment of heterotemporalities. In the previous sections, this heterotemporality allowed for venturing into the specific temporalities of media on its various levels and qualities of engagement with time. In the present section and continuing in the following two sections, heterotemporality refers to the multitemporal strata of objects, which will be set in relation to the temporality of the outside. So from the discussion of the inner time of the object, the following discussion will introduce another level of, strictly speaking, temporal relativism.

Here, I propose to emphasise something that might already have been made clear. If singular media are characterised by specific temporalities, multimedia installations, rather than being monochronic, present themselves to us as \textit{polychronic entities}. They entail many temporalities introduced by their constitutive parts, such as film and video carriers, playback and display equipment, sculptural elements of traditional nature, paintings, photographs and, at times, organic components. Additionally, technological components may be – with the exception of deactivated technological ruins – sources of another transformed temporality, a temporality of video collage, closed circuit rendition or manual or electronic manipulation of both audio and/or visual output. Different elements of media installations are characterised by different types of changeability that, in turn, take place with different intensities expressed in various pace of obsolescence or decay according to the differentiation between the works actively and passively involved with time.

To approximate the idea of temporal relationships in an artwork, and this time from an opposing point of view taking an idea that arose in the relation to multimedia to the realm of painting, I will recall Duchamp whose interest in the fourth dimension already manifested itself in his works associated with Cubism. In his book \textit{Art and Agency} (1998), the British social anthropologist Alfred Gell places Duchamp’s engagement with the fourth dimension...
in the tradition of Bergsonian durée extrapolated from the classic period of Cubism and expressed in his 'symbolic' works (*Young Man and a Girl in Spring*, 1911). The *Network of Stoppages* that is at stake (Fig. 7.6), although conceived of as a preparatory study for the later *Large Glass* (Fig. 7.7), is an independent work that recapitulates the earlier *The Three Standard Stoppages* (1913, Fig. 7.8). Although the latest examination questioned the relation of pure contingency and chance to the formation of this work, it is a common assumption that *The Three Standard Stoppages* became a constituent point of reference in the aesthetic theories of art movements based on random decisions. The *Three Standard Stoppages* consists of three curved wooden templates that were created by dropping three pieces of string, each one metre in length, from a height of one metre on a varnished support placed horizontally. The randomly generated curvatures were used to subsequently cut a template following the emerged shapes – a unique measurement, one could say, of a transitory and trivial event. The templates were not cut until 1918, but the curvatures were probably traced to draw the curved tracks of the *Network*. Following Gell’s theory in *Art and Agency*, the *Network* becomes a retension (in the Husserlian sense) to *The Three Standard Stoppages*, and a protension to the *Large Glass* (Capillary Tubes, a network seen in perspective). The *Network* depicts a network of lines and symbols reassembling a map of a railway or subway system, a map of rivers or springs departing from different points on the map and a meeting in delta, branches of a tree (a family tree?) or a map of lines on the palm of a hand. There is a point of departure (or return) of all lines in the bottom-right corner; every track ends up with cross lines that terminate their succession.

Duchamp has painted *The Three Standard Stoppages* on the unfinished painting *Young Man and Girl in Spring* rotated at ninety degrees, now ‘lying’ horizontally in the garden. Further inspection of the work reveals a preliminary sketch for the entire layout of *Large Glass* as the artist conceived it in 1913. To be sure, Duchamp’s decision to use the same canvas for three different renderings lacked economic underpinnings – the artist could have afforded to use a fresh canvas or, say, a piece of paper. Rather, the decision to create this kind of layered sandwich of work placed over another was deliberate. It shows us, as Gell puts it,

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276 Gell, *Art and Agency*, 242 – 251. It is difficult to pin down such an evolving and complex art movement as Cubism, yet it can be stated that the Cubists, too, to a certain degree, were involved in thinking about time and spatiality. One of Duchamp’s Cubist works, the *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912), was based on the chronophotography of Étienne-Jules Marey’s employed cinematic methods; it also established his name as a significant avant-garde artist in the United States. For Marey’s chronophotography in relation to the notion of time and continuity, see section 6.5.

277 In a later interview with the museum curator Katharine Kuh, Duchamp admits that issues of contingency were central in his career. Herbert Moderings, *Duchamp and the Aesthetics of Chance: Art as Experiment* (New York, Chichester and Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2010), xi-xvi.

278 For the explanation of Husserl’s idea of retention and protention, see *Bergsonian time versus time of the homogenous magnitudes*.

simultaneously a Network of Stoppages and is also a network of stoppages.\textsuperscript{280} The artwork not only depicts a map, but is a map, a network of time, of its own polychronic temporality.

The reason I am discussing Duchamp in relation to the time of objects is because the temporal stoppages of the underlying ‘perchings’ in the Network of Stoppages relate to the experience of the multilayered time of objects. Only seemingly are these temporalities immersed in the final experience of the accomplished Network. Yet while unpacking the pictorial structure of the work, inevitably images appear of the other compositions engraved on the temporal level of Network by their peculiar, quasi-invisible presence. The time network has not only been represented in The Network of Stoppages on the canvas, but it has been ‘stopped’ at different underlining levels of the preceding executions. It occurs that the heterogeneous temporality involved in these artworks operates simultaneously at the level of visibility and invisibility, the latter being the invisible stratum of an earlier accomplished work, a certain kind or protension to the stratum that follows. The mastery of this artwork lies precisely in combining the visual representation with the re- and protensions of the underlying studies involved. The discussion of Duchamp’s works will help us to understand the underlying polychronic principle of other works of art, and in this particular case, multimedia installations. Works may encase, as Duchamp’s multilayered canvas does, different strata of temporal presence, slices of time or what Chakrabarty calls heterotemporalities and Foucault names ‘heterochronies’.\textsuperscript{281} This polychronic time, a less distorting temporal view of an object’s heterotemporality, accords with Bergsonian past that is alongside the present in which it survives and piles up ceaselessly upon its strata.

The link between Duchamp and Paik may be seen on a number of levels. First, the idea of pro- and retentions of works were conceived as a further development of earlier installations, to name only TV Sea in relation to TV Garden, TV Buddha in relation to the great number of further examples incorporating a statue gazing at a screen and closed circuit video rendition, Zen for TV in relation to TV Clock and Arche Noah’s enhancement with the plant ensemble in relation to TV Garden. I have hinted at these aspects in relation to the changeability of multimedia in section 5.6. The other level that links Gell’s example of Duchamp’s multilayered canvas is the heterotemporality of multimedia installations inherently bound with the heterogeneity of their elements. Zen for Film’s film leader is evidently a new strata on the temporal structure of the works as a whole. Similarly, the plants, data carrier and playback equipment in Arche Noah, just as the planned replacements of cathode ray tubes

\textsuperscript{280} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{281} ‘Heterochronies’ accompany the notion of ‘heterotopias,’ which signifies a concept in human geography describing spaces of otherness, displayed of being here or there, physical and mental simultaneously. Michael Foucault, “Of Other Spaces (1967): Heterotopias,” trans. Jay Miskowiec, accessed January 10, 2013, http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html. In biology, heterochronies are defined as developmental changes in the timing of events, leading to changes in size and shape. In one species a process can only be defined as heterochronic in relation to the same process in another species.
in *Zen for TV* introduces another temporal presence (whereby the migration of playback technology may also be related to a new temporality of the medium). The examples here are countless. Another level of the temporal structure of a multimedia installation that relates to the *Network of Stoppages* is the different instantiations with which the artist endows, for instance, *Arche Noah*, during its life. Although not literally overlapping (in the sense of paint) as in the case of Duchamp’s *Network of Stoppages* and *Young Man and a Girl in Spring* the Weisses Haus occurrence of *Arche Noah* presents us with a distinct temporal presence in contrast with the EnBW reinstallation with the vessel painted by Paik. In conservation, the effort to ‘return’ to an earlier instance of such a work is comparable with recovering the *Young Man and a Girl in Spring* from under the *Network of Stoppages*—a truly radical intervention in the temporal strata of the work. As it happens, *Arche Noah* moves through time as a vessel of ‘stoppages’ and activations, de- and accelerations. And because we cannot ‘rewind’ time, as I have shown, such efforts would always change and add a new temporality to the artwork, rather than returning it to ‘something from before.’

### 7.7 Inside and Outside Time

The possibility of heterotemporal strata existing in objects discussed may be taken one step further and result in the recognition of the inner temporality of artworks as distinct from the time of the outside. It will, just as well, enable us to think about complex objects as entities inhabited by plural, polychronic temporalities of their internal strata in relation to the time of the outside. Later, this dialogue between the time of artworks and the time of the outside will lead us to consider the time of the museum, and, respectively, the museum’s outside time as a general result of the temporal relativity of things.

Multimedia installations, upon their recovery from a museum’s vault, and their subsequent reinstallation, encounter the new temporal context. It is often an upcoming exhibition or the loan of an artwork to another exhibition venue that requires a technical maintenance of its components. Conservation then measures such as update, emulation or migration of the playback or display equipment, migration of the data carrier and documentation. At times, the sculptural or pictorial elements are reinforced, cleaned and retouched. All in all, some form of adjustment and adaptation takes place, a mediation of a certain clash between different temporalities. I will now discuss this using examples.

*Arche Noah*’s recovery from the depot after spending nearly two decades in storage tackles this issue rather convincingly. When only seemingly *Arche Noah* was ‘protected’ in the depot from outside influences and change, obviously the natural alteration of the materials continued. When the decision to go through with its test reinstallation was made, the artwork appeared to encounter the new temporality with a certain resistance. Its elements would have to be reassembled together, the slats would need to find their proper order on the supporting
construction of the vessel and the playback and display equipment would have to be tested. Arche Noah’s resistance to adapt to the new temporal condition appeared to me as its time in storage had acted against this moment of redemption, its return to the bright and well tempered conditions of a gallery space. Indeed, some of the slats refused to be bend in form and one monitor or another failed to function. The playback equipment was still tuned to the time of the 1990s when the installation was acquired. As the most reliable and best functioning playback system back then, the laser disc players agreed with the standard employed in many of Paik’s installations at that time. The clash of the time of the ‘then’ that had been incubated in storage for nearly two decades with the present time was clearly perceivable. Consequently, the present technologies embarked on Arche Noah by digitisation of the videos and migration of the playback equipment to CF players by updating the installation to the present level of knowledge. Although such an ‘update’ entails formative forces – a new version, variation or interpretation of an artwork may emerge – it must be said that the effect of such an adaptation is only momentary and lasts only as long as another adaptation of better, faster and safer technologies takes place. Similarly to the update of technology, the later decision to rebuild the inner structure of the vessel in order to avoid the repetitive fixing of the slats and thus their inevitable damage was just a consequent step involved in adjusting Arche Noah to the politics of the institution at the time, as well as the status quo of knowledge and the competence of those involved. I will return to this in the discussion of the virtual sphere of the archive. Yet all the processes involved in adapting and assimilating Arche Noah to new conditions were nothing other than clear evidence of the coexistence of two temporalities: the inner temporality of the object and the time of the outside (meaning the time external to the work). It occurred to me that Arche Noah has lived most of its life in a vault in a certain state of limbo, sustained in a temporality of its own. It was immersed in its own immanent time and the protective wall of the storage. The time, I thought while assisting with its slow return in the effort of technicians and conservators, was ‘experienced’ by Arche Noah differently; it had a different pace during these years of its ‘deactivation.’ The installation appeared to me as a literal vessel of times past, carrying its own material evidence and the then up-to-date technology ‘arrested’ in the time of its last presentation.

The situation occurs differently upon closer look at TV Garden, and in particular at its different materialisations. Its de- and rematerialisations on the occasion of various exhibition venues seem to overcome the conflicting temporalities of the inner and outer time. The work appears as if the inner temporality accords with the temporality of the exhibition space with every single materialisation. The reason for this may be located in the repeatedly occurring new set of plants that needs to be acquired for every reinstallation, but also in the exchangeability of its playback and display equipment (that only seldom is shipped to the external exhibition venues). The installation’s reliance on an instruction foresees a possibility of new realisations by Paik’s former collaborators and assistants. This frictionless adaptation
of *TV Garden* to the present, to the temporal condition of the venue, implies that the degree of conceptuality of media installations might have an impact on the encounter between the inner and outer time. For instance, works that do not need to be reinstalled from (physically) the same elements and specified by instruction would adapt to external conditions faster than those that are bound to a prescribed display and playback appliances. This may also have one further consequence. The degree of conceptuality stands in direct relation to temporal adaptability, whereas the later might be determined by economy – it is more economic to redo an installation than to move it around, and, consequently, that the allographicity has an impact on the material value of the artwork (without necessarily affecting the value of the certificate). Conversely to media works based on instructions, it is legitimate to assume that a great number of works intentionally involving decay and degradation – for instance Dieter Roth’s edible ‘printing media’ such as slices of sausage or cheese – agree with the time of the outside and proceed to decay symbiotically bound to the time of all natural processes;\(^282\) a bad investment, in these terms.

Interestingly, the differentiation between the inside and outside time has already been put forward by Brandi. His phenomenologically underpinned *Theory of Restoration* recognises the damaging potential of the time of the outside intruding on a work’s time, where the inner time of the artwork categorised here as ‘extrachronological time’ clashes with the historical time of the viewer.\(^283\) Additionally to their recognition, in the proposed concept of the inside and outside time there is a particular role that I propose to ascribe to conservation. Conservation, I suggest, not only takes part in the adaptation of the outer time to the inner temporality of an artwork, but also moderates the clash of artwork’s inherent temporality with the time of the outside. Moreover, and also considering the heterotemporal character of artworks, conservation generates a consciousness of the diversity of the various temporalities it encounters. I will return to this in section 7.9.


Chapter 7

7.8 Museum Time

On the website of the United States space agency NASA we might find sufficient information on the Voyager program that was launched in September 1977. Two unmanned probes, Voyager I and II were sent off on an expedition to explore Jupiter and Saturn.\(^{284}\) After completing their mission to those planets, the probes were programmed to continue their journey through the outskirts of our solar system in interstellar space without a final destination. They contained, similarly to their forerunners Pioneer 10 and 11, information necessary to ‘communicate a story for our world to extraterrestrials.’\(^{285}\) The Golden Record included a phonographic record containing images, audio tracks with greetings in different languages and the music of Mozart and Bach, among others. The probes contained thus a cross section of what has been selected as representative of our culture encapsulated in a temporality of our times – a heterotopic space on an interstellar journey. It will take around forty thousand years for the Voyager to enter a different planetary system. This remarkable mission leaves us with a taste of an archaeological project that, in the words of Johan Redin, is fundamentally naïve in nature.\(^{286}\)

Rather than seeking communication with imaginary extraterrestrials, it becomes merely a hopeless attempt to preserve the present. This is mainly due to the impossibility of rendering the history accessible and readable outside the experience of culture. This, I propose, is a helpful analogy of the enclosed temporality of other form, namely of a museum.

Museums appear to incubate their objects in a slowed-down temporal flux that distinguishes itself from time that is ‘lived’ outside its walls. This is not intended to be negative; museums also become places where certain experiences of such time are possible. As a time capsule of sorts, the museum actively creates and maintains a certain temporality that affects (or ‘conserves’) the object by separating it with the floodgates of its policies and regulations.\(^ {287}\) The works that leave a museum must not be changed or manipulated by anyone other than its own conservation or registrar personnel, who are sent off with the work as guardians of this imprinted temporality as couriers journeying to venues worldwide. This is exposed particularly when looking into collections other than institutional ones in the public domain – private museums. Private collections are often located in specially designed museum premises, which distinguish themselves from the ‘protectiveness’ so characteristic of institutional collections. In my professional experience working for a number of German private collectors, I was often surprised about the openness and pragmatism of the collectors’


\(^{285}\) Ibid.


attitudes towards the circulation, exhibition and conservation of their artworks. In the case of one renowned private collection of contemporary painting and installations in North Germany, the collector’s openness to the possibility of the alteration of these works of art aimed at emphasising their ‘used’ value to a degree regarded as controversial among conservation professionals. The collection’s premises appeared to be infiltrated by time differently from that of the institutional incubated temporality; there was, so it occurred to me, a wind entering the space from the outside and rendering the works more changeable and somewhat less static. The time there appeared to be gnawed at by the outside temporalities and change. Being appointed by the collector with a double role, while maintaining my institutional responsibility as a conservator of the ZKM, I was forced to maintain a balance between this openness and an obligation to span my protective umbrella over works of art – an attitude that I adapted during years of museum practice. It is difficult to judge whether the openness towards change and modifications – an updating impulse of sorts – should be prevailed or denounced in relation to, at times, an overprotectiveness of institutional practices. It is also for good reason that some especially fragile or historically valuable works are not permitted to be loaned or to travel; their fate is therefore undoubtedly amalgamated with the collection of which policies they inherit.

It seems that in the case of media art collections, the incubated time of the museum is of necessity rendered more open and this to the very requirement of other than passive (by mean of enclosure) confrontation with the time of the outside. Media collections appear to act against institutional regulations, restriction and limitations that are designed to protect the inner temporal structure of the museum against an infestation with the time of the outside that might bring about a change.

I suggested that the inner and outer time may be associated with the time of the object in relation to the institutional time that imposes its own logic on it. Yet it may also refer to the time governing an institution in relation to the time of the outside. The inner time is thus the time of the smaller element in the system in question. So, in relation to an object, it is an object’s own time in relation to the institutional time, and in the case of a museum, it is a museum’s own temporality in relation to the outside.

Moving on from the time of objects to the time of the museum, a question appears as to the type of time that the museum might have. It is remarkable that the conception of time in Western museum culture accords with linear time, a time that follows the chronologic succession of events placed along a timeline.288 History as taught in schools and understood in museums presents us with the past as a pluperfect time, a closed period in which history is fixed and which rejects anything other than monochronous narration. This history is static and does not permeate the present; it is unreachable and sacrosanct. The viewer is passive,

barely able to interpret; he/she inhales the only ‘true’ interpretation of the exhibition context. In this chronological linearity, the rendering of the past present is in fact a detachment from the past. In the desire to connect viewers with the past, in the urge to memorialise, objects are often obscured, withdrawn from the outside world and re-inserted with a different set of meanings. Their existence, as Krzysztof Pomian noted in relation to the cabinets of Kunst- und Wunderkammern, depends on the production of meanings becoming what he calls ‘semiophores.’ In addition to being linear, and questioned often nowadays, museum time from the nineteenth century up until recently has been theological and based on the idea of progress. Foucault describes museums as heterotopias oriented towards the eternal, divorced from the flowing and transitory aspect of time and making them inaccessible to its ravages. They are projects of the perpetual and an indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place. The idea of accumulating things in a general archive of sorts enclosing different temporalities in one place belongs to modernity. As an institution, the museum becomes a time capsule in itself – as Johan Redin and Peter Jackson suggest

… one that mixes static time with dynamic in analogy with the relation between memory and forgetting. It is at the same time inclusive and exclusive … the heart of the museum is not its exhibition but its depository. … It is a belated version of the crypt, not only in the usual sense of catacombs and relics in Romanesque churches, but as the architectural internalization of its own ideological energy.

Museums may also be seen as loci that impose an artificial concept of the prolongation of life of objects in an extreme case on what is envisioned as a mock eternity. This generates a number of problems since our current knowledge that explains the complexity of life reveals that nothing can stop change, nothing releases us from the final point of trajectory. Life leads to death; birth is an act of beginning of the journey towards death. Heidegger posited not only that the Dasein is time itself, but that this possibility of being involves death, thus it is an anticipation of death. Heidegger also develops the notion of time in terms of being-towards-death in which death is the ownmost possibility of Dasein (Der Begriff der Zeit 1924) in being-towards-death. Museums and conservators have the task of dealing with the very issue of

289 For further discussion, see Jeremy Ahearne, Michel De Certeau: Interpretation and its Other (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 9-34.  
291 Foucault, Of Other Spaces.  
294 Martin Heidegger and Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann. Der Begriff der Zeit (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2004 (1924)).
finitude, acting against the frangibility of mediums in a barely possible act of salvaging. They deal with illusion of sustaining the passage of time and managing change, protecting the object from the threads of obsolescence and decay, degradation. The paradox of this task is its main dilemma, as there is, as it has already been suggested, no possibility of arresting time, no method of freezing something evolving towards entropy.

### 7.9 Merging Temporalities: The Conservation Narrative

In this chapter, I have argued that multimedia installations have a specific relation to time – they transform (manipulate) time and are being transformed by time. I also differentiated between the active and passive involvement of artworks with time and proposed the definition of art that responds slower or faster to time. With reference to multimedia installations, conservation has become a temporal intervention in artworks, a temporal translation of media. The inherent temporalities of media together with the heterotemporal implications derived from Bergson and the certain linearity of the decay and alteration of materials result in the understanding of multimedia installations as heterotemporal assemblages. On another level of heterotemporality, I proposed to distinguish the time of the outside from the inside time of the object, and in relation to that, define conservation as an active mediator in the confrontation of different temporalities. Such a concept acknowledges the continuity of duration as a heterotemporal existence of things in time.

To conserve an artwork would depend on the way conservation relates the inner time of the work to the time that transforms it – the time of ageing and decay. This temporal relativism of the inner and outer time requires contention and a deep understanding of the mechanisms involved in its creation. Yet there is still one question remaining as to how conservation fulfils this task. The locus of such contention is, I propose, the 'conservation narrative' – the way in which the inner and outer time are connected and moderated and on the grounds of which decisions in conservation are made.

My idea of the conservation narrative leans on the narrative theory of the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur. He implemented a kind of discourse in the form of a narrative to interpret the different kinds of time involved in human condition. By creating a narrative (an emplotment, a plot), he synthesises the cosmic time – the time of the world in which all change occurs – and the lived time, the time of human lives.295 This takes place through language. People establish methods to harmonise these two 'times' using calendars, for instance, and also by creating 'historical time.' The latter becomes human time ‘to the

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extent’ – posits Riceour – ‘that it is articulated through a narrative mode.’ To reiterate, a central point of Ricoeur’s narrative, which mediates between different kinds of time, is that it connects phenomenological time (human time) with cosmic time (where both humans and non-humans are subject to time that is non-human). Furthermore, and important for my argument, he proposes that time may only become understandable when it is narrated. Narrativity is often associated with telling a story that exists in time, ergo the narrative becomes a way of mediating different times.

Following this, I elaborate on what Ricoeur classifies as phenomenological time to technological time, insofar as the latter is also a fundamental dimension of the human – according to the French philosopher Bernard Stiegler – and one of the inner times of the object, where outer time involves physical processes such as ageing and decay that are not produced essentially by human intervention. The concept of the conservation narrative is based on the assumption that these different kinds of time become mediated through meaningful emplotment – a storytelling that may become explicated in the narrative of conservation documentation, oral narrative and the artwork’s biography. I elaborate on these concepts in relation to the archive in section 8.5.

As I suggested, the conservation narrative unites the heterotemporal complexity of artworks and fuses the inner time of the artwork with the time of the outside. If the inner time of the object ‘accepts’ the change and the time of the outside, the material change, degradation and decay are inscribed in the work. Artists who work with decay equate the outer time with the inner time of the work, as I have shown using the example of Paik’s technological graveyard. Here, the function of the conservation narrative is to explain the equation of the inner and outer time and provide a reasoning for the withdrawal from traditional conservation actions as oriented against the process of alteration in artworks and approximating, if not equating, change that occurs to them with ‘loss.’ The recognition of an artwork as being susceptible to alteration and decay is in line with the acceptance of its mortality. This contradicts the Romantic idea of an artist-as-god creating an artwork out of nothingness with the ambition for it to last ‘unchanged’ for centuries; to return something to its ‘original state’ may be a

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297 Stiegler challenged the idea of an originary, non-technological human in Western philosophy by arguing that technology is an ontological constituent of humans. Humans can access time only through supplements including all technologies (time deploys technical prosthetics and is deployed within it), so technological time is a fundamental dimension of the human. For Stiegler’s ‘time of techics’ (articulated in, and as a technological development, technical prostheses and technicity) and its implications, see Ian James, “Bernard Stiegler and the Time of Technics,” *Cultural Politics* Vol.6, Issue 2 (2010): 207-228.
298 In the context of the changing conditions of Nauman’s *Art Make-Up* Laurenson argues that not all change can be equated with loss, yet often loss may be incremental. For this matter, see Laurenson, “Shifting Structures, Identity and Change.”
confirmation of this kind of Romantic idea. If the work is mortal and changeable, the only way to understand its imperative is to tell a story about it, which may become (yet not necessarily) recorded in a documentary record. On the other hand, the desire of some artists is to make artworks for eternity (early version of Damien Hirst’s *The Physical Impossibility of Death...*, 1991 or Bill Spinhoven’s *I Art*, 2009) in which case – in the case of a work expressing a sense of eternity – the ageing and decay would work against its inner time. The conservation narrative imparts knowledge of complex installations involving exchangeable materials. As I have shown using examples of artworks based on instruction and the selection of multimedia installations that involve exchangeable material (*TV Garden, Zen for Film*), they are able to punctually equate the time of the outside with the inner time of the object.

There is one more point that involves a significant perspective on temporality and that I have already addressed from another perspective in section 3.6. As hinted on in the Brandian understanding of time in his theory, the perspective of the viewer as having a sense of their own temporality is very relevant in relation to installations and multimedia artworks. The temporality of the viewer thus forms another path in the conservation narrative and opens up a fascinating opportunity for future enquiry.

In sum, the conservation narrative creates a space for encountering different temporalities of changeable artworks (slower and faster temporal art) and the time of the outside, and influences decisions about present and future conservation procedures. The conservation narrative may shape the way works’ trajectories are being created in a biographical approach, and writing artworks’ biographies may become one of the forms of this conservation narrative (see for instance the narrative of *Arche Noah* and *TV Garden* in chapter 1). Although it does not yet hold an answer to the question pertaining to the identity of the conservation object – the problem of time and the problem of identity though time – the conservation narrative mediates the changeability of a multimedia artwork as integral to its identity. In a museum, it may support the function of a museum memory, consisting of recorded data (documentation, protocols, photographs and audio and video recordings) and unrecorded data (both explicated and unexplicated). Furthermore, it may become a part of the archive, but not an archive that comprises mere dusty documents and cherishes deactivation and stasis, but a dynamic realm of birth and creation. It is an archive where all the threads meet, where the continuity of an artwork is being maintained and to which I will now turn your attention.

299 The Romantic idea of the artwork pertains to the inspired original creation of an artistic genius of which every element of the artwork is a manifestation.

300 The subsequent decay of which was hotly debated in the art world. Damien Hirst, “Could You All Please Relax?,” *The Guardian*, October 1, 2007.

III. ARCHIVE AND IDENTITY
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Heraclitus, you know, says that everything moves on and that nothing is at rest; and, comparing existing things to the flow of a river, he says that you could not step into the same river twice.  
Plato¹

Persistence of Identity Through Change: The Ship of Theseus

In the account of Plutarch (Vita Thesei, 22-3) the person of Theseus, mythological demigod and hero, surfaces as the leader of the youth of classical Athens who is responsible for a certain type of preservation of a ship during a sea journey.

The ship wherein Theseus and the youth of Athens returned had thirty oars, and was preserved by the Athenians down even to the time of Demetrius Phalereus, for they took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their place, insomuch that this ship became a standing example among the philosophers, for the logical question of things that grow; one side holding that the ship remained the same, and the other contending that it was not the same.²

Plutarch raises a philosophical paradox that is known from antiquity and which continues to be intensively debated in contemporary ontology. This paradox addresses the problem of the retention of identity by objects experiencing change. As subject to change, when does an object become something else and when may we still speak about the same object? How much change can an object bear while still retaining its identity and how much would change transform it to become something else?³ The account of the ship of Theseus provides a basis for thinking about the changeability of objects in relation to their identity. Plutarch reports that in the good faith of its preservation the ship of Theseus has been entirely rebuilt. If Theseus had completely rebuilt his ship, some of us may argue that the ship would not be the same. Would it then stay the same if Theseus had included one or two planks from the old ship? How many parts needed to remain the same to consider his ship still being the same?⁴ Where do we draw the line? This thought experiment can be even pushed further. Let us consider the following situation. If Theseus’ ship was rebuilt during a sea journey and another ship was reconstructed by a follower of his based on the elements that he threw overboard, and both ships, at the end of the journey, were to turn back to the harbour, which ship would then be ‘Theseus’ ship: the new one sailed by Theseus, or the reconstructed one sailed by his follower? Such a situation might well be possible given that Theseus had transported all the

¹ Plato, Cratylus, 402A.  
⁴ In this context, German language differentiates between ‘dasselbe’ and ‘das gleiche.’

210
spare parts on board in the anticipation of damage to the ship and that his follower would bother himself with a reconstruction of the ship while sailing in the proximity of the one captained by Theseus. So if the new ship is not the ship on which Theseus left the harbour before sailing off but also the reconstructed ship of the follower seems to not be the one of Theseus (he obviously never left his ship), could we also assume that both ships – the one on which Theseus finished his journey and the reconstructed ship – are the ships of Theseus? This rather paradoxical situation may become clearer if we consider the conceptual mechanism governing our thoughts. The view that the identity of the object is entailed in the identity of its component parts is expressed in the *Mereological Theory of Identity* (MTI). The MTI presumes that if every compound object is composed of the same elements seen from two different time perspectives so the object continues to exist maintaining its identity. If this were true, the ship of the follower would be the one that maintained the identity, being numerically the same as the one on which Theseus left the harbour. This theory would, however, appear too strong if we consider that Theseus never left his ship; it was gradually rebuilt while he was sailing it on his sea journey. So of necessity the ship that he sailed into the harbour has to be Theseus’ ship because he never ‘exchanged’ it. Now, are perhaps both ships the ship of Theseus? This is an incorrect proposition due to the impossibility of material objects to co-occupy the same place at the same time, or, so to say, to be spatially coincident. Admittedly, one could also argue that these ships do not occupy the same space since they are placed at different points on the harbour. Considering this, there is still the impossible task of conceiving one single object occupying two places and times.

Another view on Theseus’ ship paradox explicating the aspect of the persistence of identity of things through space and time is offered by the river metaphor. It holds that things can retain their identity through time despite the change of their physicality. It could be maintained that one cannot step into the same river twice because its waters change; yet, although not in numerical sense, it is still the same river into which we step. So compositionally, just as the ship on which Theseus sailed into the harbour, the river has changed yet, in some sense, it is still the same river.\(^5\) The French philosopher Jacques Lacan pushes the aspect of things being materially and compositionally different even further. The paradox of the 10.15 express train, which he relates to the signifier and signified, is based on the system of differences.\(^6\) Lacan notes that a 10.15 express train, despite its varying material constitution and even despite its delays or multiple occurrences as many 10.15 expresses succeeding each other every day, is not hindered from being identified as a ‘10.15 express train.’ So even though the train has a different structure and components, it is still the same 10.15 express train.

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5 Two further concepts pertaining to the unstoppable changeability of things in time is the one of fluxism and four dimensionality.

Lacan claims that what gives the train its identity is thus neither its material constitution, nor even the time it departs, but what he calls a ‘signifier,’ which gains its signification through its difference from other signifiers (the other train times on the timetable for example), in terms of which the ‘signified’ is designated. Rather than being filled with intrinsic meaning, a signifier functions within a symbolic system or structure of differences. So the 10.15 train functions within the structure of a timetable, similarly to a ‘Theseus ship’ that by bearing Theseus’ name (rather than any other of the possible names) and despite its different material constitution, may also function as a signifier. It is this that gives the ship its identity, which is based on difference and not on intrinsic properties. The relation of this to art might be sought in Duchamp’s gesture of the nomination of an object as a work of art. With consequences for conservation, Paik parallels Duchamp by exerting his right to name the constituents as the work of art (Arche Noah’s animals and plants and electro trash from the technological graveyard of Something Pacific, among others).

Dealing with the problem of identity we might be served by an alternative theory that echoes the Lacanian proposition by circumventing the numerical sameness of things in time. The theory of spatio-temporal continuity (SPC) is based on intuition and presumes that objects may persist in maintaining their identity by tracing a continuous path through space-time. Unless the form and shape of an object is maintained, the gradual exchange of its components does not affect its identity that continues to persist in time. The example of the spatio-temporal continuity of the wooden Shinto shrine in Ise, Japan will allow us to further reflect on the identity of Zen for Film and TV Garden. That the Shinto shrine is disassembled and rebuilt anew every twenty years testifies that its identity does not necessarily depend on the sameness of its material components (Fig. 8.0). Rather than preserving the material aspect of the architecture, the 1,300-year-old periodic reconstruction tradition – the Shikinen Sengu – preserves an ancient building tradition. That is not to say that the understanding of such an approach is solely related to the cultural context and culture-specific, although in

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8 Similarly, George Brock-Nannestad reminds the apocryphal story that concerns the hammer used to build the biblical Noah's Ark. The hammer maintained its identity – equated by him with authenticity – despite the fact that its parts have been replaced. George Brock-Nannestad "The Rationale Behind Operational Conservation Theory," in *Conservation Without Limits: IIC Nordic Group XV Congress 23 – 26 August 2000, Helsinki, Finland*, ed. Riitta Koskivirta (Helsinki: IIC Nordic Group, 2000), 29. This reminds us of the recent appropriation of the story of "My Grandfather Axe" by Damien Hirst. Hirst, "Could You All Please Relax?"

9 All materials used for the new temple are manufactured anew and many of the instruments have changed and been replaced by their modern and more time-efficient equivalents; yet since the seventh century, the Ise Shrine has resisted major architectural change through the continuation of rebuilding procedures, and the repeated transfer of professional skills of generations of re-builders in the form of mainly oral but also a number of written accounts. Cassana Adams, "Japan's Ise Shrine and Its Thirteen-Hundred-Year-Old Reconstruction Tradition," *Journal of Architectural Education* Vol. 52, No. 1 (September 1998): 49-60.

The concurrent opposition and convergence of the presented theories to the apprehension of identity of objects in time both as spatio-temporal and material continuation is clearly exemplified in the case of artworks being simultaneously objects and entities endowed with certain values and aesthetic rather than common sense functionality. Similarly to the Ise Shrine, and with respect to spatio-temporal continuity, the multiple manifestations of Paik’s Zen for Film projections may retain the artwork’s identity despite the restitution of its physical components such as the film leader and, occasionally, even the film projector. This spatio–temporal continuity leaning on intuitive reasoning is often opposed by those who believe in material authenticity based on palpable evidence at best traced back to its origins. When it comes to Arche Noah, the specific valency assigned to the physicality of Arche Noah’s singular elements such as the painted vessel, the animals and the photographs relate to the material evidence they carry and accords with the Mereological Theory of Identity. Clearly, this continuation through material evidence is linked to the autographic trace accomplished by the artist and its role of sentencing the work to a certain singularity.\footnote{At this point, it should be remarked that in the essay Restaurierung des Zerfalls (1997) Groys mentions the ship metaphor in relation to the question of the identity of objects, yet without a more profound analysis of its implications. What is very interesting here, however, is Groys’ argumentation against his earlier suggestion: according to him an artwork cannot be judged by its functionality and capability to perform a certain function, as does a ship that sails on waters and moves forward. An artwork, posits Groys, has lost its original functionality and become ‘a corpus without a soul’ by the way in which it is torn from of its original context and entrusted to the custody of the museum. This is interesting insofar as Groys’ thinking about the functionality of the artwork goes back to its origins as a ‘usable’ object or sacral artefact and denies its functionality as an aesthetic object created – in a large number of contemporary installations – precisely for aesthetic apprehension and the museum context. Artworks are, following Groys, from the very beginning ‘flawed;’ everything that is collected in museums is thus an effect of an earlier de-functionalisation, deformation and expropriation (see section 8.2). Departing from this assumption Groys assumes that restoration is an attempt to return to an original condition of a work, which he denotes as impossible, proposing to conceive of restoration as an ‘Art Supplement.’ The latter is derived from Derrida’s example of writing (Ger.: ‘Schrift’) that has the role to prevent forgetting in relation to speech and thought, yet at the same time being somewhat insufficient to express everything that is meant and having a surplus value by enabling the creation of meaning. According to Groys, restoration fails in its attempt to recover ‘the original’ but also defines itself anew in relation to the ‘actual New’ on which it is acting (the signs of the old and the signs of the new are interpendently related). Boris Groys, “Restaurierung des Zerfalls,” in Logik der Sammlung (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1997), 197-204.} Yet the understanding of Arche Noah’s continuity is somewhat twofold. On the other hand, unconcerned about this fact, Arche Noah might shed the bearing of its plants and audiovisual apparatus in favour of new arrangements without annulling its identity. Despite the changes made to its organic and technological ensembles, Arche Noah’s identity continues to persist. In fact, what we can learn...
from these examples is that the dualistic (autographic and allographic) nature of multimedia installations characterised by changeability may continue through time in the form of objects that carry material evidence and the trace of the artist and, at the same time, follow the spatio-temporal logic retaining their identity despite the material change. This is also in the case of Canopus, which shares with Arche Noah the same dualism, namely that of the exchangeability of display technology and non-exchangeability, as it turned out, of the hubcap. Therefore, it might be argued that the autographic moment moves the multimedia installations into the realm of things that persist in time following the Mereological Theory of Identity and where identity is retained through the material evidence of their constituents. What follows from this, is that the replacement of the hubcap would entirely shift the understanding of the continuity of the artwork from the Mereological Theory of Identity to the spatio-temporal realm based on intuitive reasoning, somewhat undermining the ruling conventions (Paik’s trace deemed more important than the Wirkung of the ensemble). I will continue this discussion in section 9.2.

Sameness and diversity are necessarily bound with the temporal realm in which they occur. Whereas the Ise Shrine exists at subsequent times and we may thus speak about its diachronic appearance while comparing two of its manifestations, TV Garden challenges us with yet another paradox related to the problem of identity. It materialises synchronically at Tate Liverpool on the occasion of Paik’s British retrospective in 2010 while still on display at the K21, Ständehaus, in Düsseldorf. This may be irrelevant, one could argue, since we already know that TV Garden exists at three different collections worldwide (New York, Düsseldorf and Seoul). But can it then also exist more than one time in one collection? Can its double be identical to its point of reference? Sameness and diversity can occur either synchronically or diachronically. This formulation implies that at a particular time there can be sameness in one respect but diversity in another, or sameness in one respect but diversity in another over time. TV Garden would be thus necessarily different when occurring at the same time as a reference (TV Garden in K21) and as a loan (at Tate Liverpool) from the same collection, but it would be the same as one installation conceived by Paik and distributed across three collections worldwide. To refer to Lacan’s nominalist theory of identity concerned with the signifier and the signified, we could assume that everything that occupies the position of TV Garden is TV Garden – a signifier – legitimised by an oral or written instruction authorising the work.13


13 Here, the signifier has no other function that its own quality of being a signifier – a nomination fulfilling its function of naming. For a discussion on the role of the signifier in the age of the readymade and the issue of designating something as an artwork see Thierry de Duve, Pictorial Nominalism.
On the grounds of this brief explanation of the possible variants for understanding artworks’ identity, their diversity and sameness occurring in time, and with the knowledge of the instigators of change and its relation to time taken from the previous chapters, we may now move on to the last crucial point in this discussion. If the identity of artworks persists through changes, where does the key to such persistence lay? Where is the locus of artworks’ potential to change and on which basis do artworks manage to maintain their identity through time? Furthermore, what can ultimately condition this change in a reciprocal relation of contribution and creation and where is the ground for the identification of what the artwork is?

The answer lies, I propose, in the archive.

In this third and last part of the thesis I will argue that the identity of artworks persisting in time as both material evidence and spatio-temporal continuity is contained, sustained and prescribed by the archive. It is on the basis of the archive that decisions are being made. Entangled and immersed in a system of various ecologies, the archive ensures the continuity of changeable (post-conceptual) artworks and constructs what I propose to name a temporal materiality. It also solves the problem of the duality of concept and materialisation (Part I of this thesis) by rendering the concept material and temporal to the extent that both the concept – now freed from its transcendental status – and material are located on the same level as the materiality of the work. The engagement with the archive raises questions of when an archive is itself a/the work, and when the work is external, being informed by it. Last but not least, such an extended concept of the archive permits the weight of intentionality to be relativised and enables the maintenance of the artwork’s identity through the acceptance of change.

In the following two chapters, I will explain the processes that lie at the basis of these assumptions. In order to do so, in chapter 8 I will investigate the archive on both its material and non-material level and conceptualise it as an entity of both spatial and temporal qualities. This provides the grounds – the substance and the concept – to identify what an artwork is and how it is being constituted. I will show that with respect to the identity of multimedia installations the archive may harbour their past, be a resource for the creation of the present but also bear potentiality for their future. The upcoming sections will open with a discussion related to the form of the archive most familiar to the conservator and museum professional – the museum archive – the example of which I will use to illustrate how the system of knowledge-
construction and the gathering of traces function in the museum domain. Touching upon the archive as an institutional repository, from the many perspectives of fragmented and specialised knowledge, I will strive to prove that the number of institutional and specialised paper and object archives might contribute to the archival knowledge about the artwork, yet by no means exhaust it. Furthermore, the archive addressed in my writing, both inside and outside the museum, will be dispersed, scattered and fragmented rather than centralised and total. In this chapter's conclusion, I will return to the notion of the conservation narrative and discuss the ways in which it may form and contribute to the archive.

In chapter 9, by explaining the notion of Aristotelian phronesis, I will investigate how conservation decisions are guided by practical knowledge. I will revisit the notion of creative conservation and apply it to conservation's interpretational engagement with the archive. In what follows, I will explain the retroactive character of the archive, in which the artwork's subsequent manifestations may become actualised on its basis but also, simultaneously, contribute to the subsequent actualisation performed on the basis of the archive. Responding to the dynamism of changeable artworks, the archive will become a dynamic entity, not only of material, but also of time, reacting to and acting on the nature of artworks and retro and proactively shaping their identity. Lastly, I will investigate the mutual relationship between the archive and the artwork and examine the possibility of the archive becoming an artwork itself. Conversely, I will also examine the possibility for artworks to create archives of their own selves exemplified in the discussion on the installation Untitled (Piano, 1993). The artworks will become individuals – interiorities and terminals through which objects and subjects pass through and shape them; they also become compounds of the larger archive, reflecting structures, systems and ecologies that permeate it.

In the following, the archival engagements will be based on my knowledge of the functionalities of museum structures and the archive from the position of a conservator. The experience of the non-physical sphere of the archive will be drawn from the participation in the practice of the reinstallation of Paik's works and the first-hand observation of how they become actualised on its basis and how the tacit knowledge of persons in its possession may become mystified. I will later involve findings from my personal encounters with the archive from the position of a researcher – with particular emphasis on the research experiences in Tokyo – to show that archives may exist solely in the non-physical sphere of transient memories and recollection. The image of the variety of archival encounters can only become complete by supplementing it with my own assemblage of the archive for the purposes of this thesis.
CHAPTER 8.

The Material and the Immaterial Archive

8.1 What is an Archive?

In this chapter I discuss archival complexities based on my experience working in large museum and exhibition institutions. This is enhanced by the insights that I have gathered in the course of archival encounters while extracting bits and pieces of tacit and articulated knowledge on Paik’s oeuvre in Western and Eastern cultural contexts that were marked by different degrees of accessibility. In looking into the functionalities of the museum’s archive, I construct an image of archival decentralisation and prove that the information that becomes available during archival research is partial and fragmentary. The archive discussed here is of material and immaterial quality, and entails articulated and documented as well as unexplicated knowledge and memory. This discussion is underpinned by practical experience related to the archival recovery of Arche Noah, and moves onto the aspects of archival activation and conservation’s creative engagement with the archive in the next chapter.

In current critical writing, artistic practices and museum studies, the archive seems to be omnipresent. There are numerous publications concerned with the theme of the archive pertaining to its definition as both material space where documents are gathered, and a broader context of cultural contextualisation. In common parlance, the archive is associated with a rather large container of paperwork that no longer takes part in bureaucratic circulation. Archives may be seen as active nexuses of a variety of documents involving traces, objects, images and inscriptions through which we are able to recall and revisit individual and shared memories and histories. Yet not everything is an archive; as opposed to the uniqueness of archival documents, for instance, a library is not equivalent to an archive by the virtue of it being constituted of reproducible, published resources.

16 Merewether, ed., The Archive.
Archives deal with the issue of the impossibility of storing everything. Traditional archives are mostly organised through inclusion and exclusion.\(^\text{17}\) This system is determined by dominant powers that have the capacity to decide what is being preserved in an archive and what is excluded.\(^\text{18}\) The archive is often linked with a physical space in which documents are gathered and organised, a space that often overcomes our imagination of dimensions (municipal archives) and a system of access (modern archives) and, in their significance, become only graspable when undergoing destruction (for example, the partial destruction of the municipal archive of the city Cologne in 2011). It was, among others, the nineteenth century objectification of linear time and historical process that led to the shift from archives being legal depositories to institutions of historical research based in public administration.\(^\text{19}\)

The word ‘archive’ is etymologically linked with ‘Arkheion’ meaning a house of archons, magistrates, and ‘arché’ – magistracy, office government – a point of departure for the Derridean concept of archive.\(^\text{20}\) Jacques Derrida, the French philosopher who developed his approach of ‘deconstruction’ out of a structuralist critique of phenomenology proposed to look at the archive as a physical, destructible locus of records, disclosing its meaning only in the future.\(^\text{21}\) His assignment of authority to archons, Greek superior magistrates, will echo in the forthcoming discussion. Furthermore, if we follow Derrida, the ‘archive,’ may be linked with archaeology, as a search for foundations or a founding principle.

Yet the archive is not only what is there – a physical space containing unique things and documents – but also a memory, trace and interpretation. Since Foucault the definition of an archive as a collection of records and its archival space has been supplemented by modern theories complementing the physical with a quasi-transcendental metaphysical space.\(^\text{22}\) The way in which we understand the archive nowadays may entail both conceptual and material approaches resulting in the formation of cultural memory. In the words of German media theorists and art historians Knut Ebeling and Stephan Günzel we may speak about ‘two bodies of archive’ – an institution and a conception, meaning a working space and a method.\(^\text{23}\) This


\(^\text{18}\) In his book *Order of Things* (*Les Mots et les Choses*, 1966) Foucault maintains that to understand the archive means to look into the systems of powers which determine what is being archived and for what reason, to examine who created the rules and its political and material conditions. To grasp the archive may thus become a way to understand the system that rules the archive. Foucault criticised the archive as a static entity of dead things and no more a part of a living culture. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2002).

\(^\text{19}\) Spieker, *The Big Archive*, Xii, 1.


\(^\text{22}\) Foucault, *The Order of Things*.

\(^\text{23}\) ‘The archive always has two bodies: it is as much an institution as a conception, meaning a working place and method.’ Knut Ebeling and Stephan Günzel, *Archivologie: Theorien des Archives in Wissenschaft, Medien und Künsten* (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2009), 10.
is also, at least since Foucault’s (quasi) transcendental conception of the archive, increasingly confusing – the archive may both be a theory and a concrete physical space of storage. The role of an archive as a research practice has recently become manifest in termini such as ‘archivology’ and ‘archival sciences.’\textsuperscript{24} According to social-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, the archive is a site of memory, which places it between the physicality of the stored material – the archival body – and a spirit that animates it, ‘the pastness itself.’\textsuperscript{25} Yet if the archive was synonymous with memory, would there be a need for its physical space? In his anthropological view Appadurai conceives of an archive as a social and ‘deliberate’ project, a work of imagination.\textsuperscript{26} If the archive is our cultural memory, the exclusion from the archive has necessarily to do with forgetting.\textsuperscript{27} So archiving has to do with exclusion and forgetting as much as with memory, following what has been put forward by the German philosopher and cultural critic Friedrich Nietzsche – that we have to forget in order to imagine.\textsuperscript{28} The archive’s destructibility would be the equivalent of forgetting in the physical realm and links us again to the archive as a physical space.\textsuperscript{29} On all levels of its conceptualisation as both a theory and a physical space, rather than being passive, the archive is – what should not be lost sight of – a dynamic space of exchange and actualisation; in the words of Foucault the archive regulates and generates statements.\textsuperscript{30} As such, it is also once more distinct from a library – the archive lacks disconnection with the active production of knowledge.\textsuperscript{31}

8.2 The Museum Archive and its Documentary Dimension

The dialectic of empirical and transcendental dynamics, back and forth between the concept and the institution, opens up another most rewarding field of investigation explicated by the

\textsuperscript{24} In German ‘Archivology’ and ‘Archivwissenschaften.’ Ebeling and Günzel, Archivologies. Archival sciences are being taught in graduate programs, for example at the Universities in Bern and Posdam.


\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 24.

\textsuperscript{27} For archive as a cultural memory, see Aleida Assmann, "Archive im Wandel der Mediengeschichte," in Archivologie: Theorien des Archives in Wissenschaft, Medien und Künsten, eds. Knut Ebeling and Stephan Günzel (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2009), 165-175; for archive as a locus of a memory see Wolfgang Ernst, ”Das Archiv als Gedächtnisort,” in Archivologie: Theorien des Archives in Wissenschaft, Medien und Künsten, eds. Knut Ebeling and Stephan Günzel (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2009), 176-200.

\textsuperscript{28} Forgetfulness was essential to Nietzsche’s philosophical project as an upholder of psychic order. Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980 (1874)).

\textsuperscript{29} Derrida, Archival Fever, 12.

\textsuperscript{30} For a view on conceptions of the archive in contemporary thought see Eivind Røssak, ed., The Archive in Motion: New Conceptions on the Archive in Contemporary Thought and New Media Practices (Oslo: Novus Press, 2010).

\textsuperscript{31} Ebeling and Günzel go so far as to posit that the archive rather than the library became the locus of knowledge. Ebeling and Günzel, Archivologies, 12. For an overview of archival conceptions and their relation to the creation, curation and consumption of the archive, see Sue Breakell, “Perspectives: Negotiating the Archive,” Tate’s Online Research Journal (Spring 2008), accessed January 5, 2012, http://www.tate.org.uk/download/file/fid/7288.
functionalities of archives in museums. In conservation and museum practice, rather than there being a largely bureaucratic instrument in the hands of the authorities, the archive is a facticity and an everyday tool, a locus where the empirical proof of the daily rituals, routines and conceptual mechanisms underpinning it lie within reach.

As places where artworks are being created, re-created or re-installed, contemporary art museums have a particular role in forging and maintaining archives. At the most basic level, the museum archive is full of documents, files and images related to the acquisition, maintenance, exhibition, conservation, insurance and loans of artworks – a surely unexhausted list. Museum archives contain information not only about their objects but also about their subjects, a professional group engaged with the institutional life of objects. Often institutions that collect or exhibit multimedia artworks either participate in their technical development or facilitate their re-installation. This gives rise to a vast number of material and non-material data derived from these projects and ultimately processed by complex archival structures and conveyed in their records. The museum archive reflects the impulse to archive everything and, simultaneously, the impossibility of doing that.

Although all institutions have their archives (including business and government departments), the archive of a museum – mandated with care for the cultural, visual heritage – has a particular role in preserving records of the artefacts in its custody. Whereas many of the contemporary museums adopt this role gradually, the museums of modern and traditional art have long established archivisation practices. Crucially, the museum archive and, as I will explain later, the museum as an archive play a dominant role in creating the artwork’s identity.

The particular role of museum in relation to the archive may also be the reason why the archivisation is closely associated with musealisation (or: ‘museumification’). The musealisation of artworks takes place precisely on the disjunction of their previous vital function, the ‘immediacy of life,’ and their afterlife as museum objects. In the essay Valéry Proust Museum (1967), Adorno discusses the association between a museum and mausoleum, ascribing it more than phonetic analogy. This somewhat echoes Heidegger’s contention that ‘… Placing [artworks] in a collection has withdrawn them from their own world’ and Hegel’s remark that ‘… Art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the

32 Adorno, “Valéry Proust Museum,” 175-185. See also section 1.1.
33 “The German word museal has unpleasant overtones. It describes objects to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying. … Museum and mausoleum are connected by more than phonetic association. Museums are like the family sepulchres of works of art.’ Adorno, “Valéry Proust Museum,” 175. Similarly, discussing durability and change in heritage from a biochemist’s view, F. Cramer posits that a museums ‘takes on a character of a mausoleum’ in that it can only present objects taken out of their context. Cramer, “Durability and Change,” 23.
past." In his essay, juxtaposing Valéry’s and Proust’s view on art – which emphasises the autonomy of the artwork by the former and gives primacy to the experience and memory by the latter – Adorno provides us with a dialectic leading to the thesis that works must be sent to ‘death’ in order to live. Paraphrasing Adornian death and re-birth of objects, and divorcing the archive from its exclusive ‘pastness,’ at this stage of my argument, it shall suffice to conceive of a museum archive as a locus of works’ de- and re-activation based on the active involvement of conservation and curation.

8.3 Archival Dispersion: Inside and Outside the Museum

The institutional material archive is constituted by a network of micro archives of the museum’s various departments and specialities (Fig. 8.1). Directorial, curatorial, conservation, registration and technical archives, to name but a few, underlie all daily activities, gathering an ever-expanding quantity of information and knowledge about the artwork and its performance in the environment. Addressing the dispersion of the archival record, there are three more points worth mentioning. First, many established institutions, such as the MoMA in New York, maintain an archive that functions to document the history of the museum. Second, and often lacking a prescribed form and written policy, a micro archive (in the literary sense compared with the vast amount of archival information available in its entirety) is accessible for external research from which the files determined ‘for internal use only’ have been extracted. I will return to this aspect in section 8.4. Third, the archives within a research library (e.g. MoMA, Stedelijk Museum) or sometimes ‘archives within an archive’ at the museum (e.g. Nam June Paik Art Center) including artists’ correspondence, memorabilia or even multiples, contribute to the rhizomatic complexity of the archive. Consequently, as a locus of the many heterogeneous repositories, the museum in itself, I suggest, might be seen as an archive. It can thus be said that at the level of the museum – and specific to its institutional culture, collection policies and dimensions – both the museum as an archive and

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35 Similarly, Groys holds that while images may be downgraded to the illustration of art history as a sort of iconoclastic gesture on the one hand, on the other, they may become aestheticised and transformed. Groys, *Art Power*, 50-51.

36 At the MoMA archives, a number of archivists are engaged in collecting, organising, cataloguing and making accessible the museum's development, issues related to exhibitions, publication, but also board and staff members. MoMA, accessed January 13, 2013, http://www.moma.org/learn/resources/archives/.

the museum's archives shape the identity of an artwork being in its custody by determining the knowledge about it.

Owing to the fact that conservators stand out in museums for their professional dedication to the documentation of artworks, the conservation department creates its own specific archive, which, in the case of large conservation departments may even be split into sub-departmental archives. This renders the conservation profession unusual in zeal to document, especially in comparison to the other museum professionals who do not – or cannot – invest time in the documentation of the knowledge of the artwork.

In the day-to-day practice of an institution, various micro archives established by collecting relevant documents, objects and traces in the registers of various departments are being constructed simultaneously. This is not to say that in the traditional sense each department maintains a separate record of a work in a specially-designed file as the idealised view of an archival register would suggest, but rather that each holds a record of specific aspects related to the work. In other words, the separated repositories of object-related documentations create a certain dispersion of the archive in a museum.

For the research orientation of this thesis, I will first address the way in which a conservation department creates the archive to later proceed to discuss other micro archives that are crucial in creating the artwork's identity. In what follows I will base the account on the discussion of the archival structures of ZKM, expanding them with experience drawn from the research for this thesis in large, international museums such as MoMA, Guggenheim Museum, New York and others.

Conservation departments are constantly engaged in gathering various information that, in varying degrees of precision, document a work of art, be it in the museums' own or loaned collections. In these terms the museum is preoccupied with pinning down all possible evidence related to an artwork's nature or behaviour. In the case of ZKM, the conservation department holds an extensive record of conservation, condition and damage reports, work-specific exhibition maintenance reports (daily maintenance procedures as well as reports of special requirements for works being on display) and loan, depot surveillance, climate control

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39 It might be argued that a repository is not eponymous with an archive, since, to a degree, the archival information in it is being ordered and systematised. Although it might be true in some cases, it is merely a subjective judgement, whose order or system renders a pile of unordered documents an archive. The meaning of the archive lies not in a single document but in a group of documents that are connected to one another in a system of interrelations. Spieker, The Big Archive, 18. These relationships render an administrative registry 'an organism in itself, with its own vital principle.' Friedrich Meinecke, Erlebtes, 1982–1901 (Leipzig: Koehler and Amelang, 1941), 142-143 quoted in Spieker, The Big Archive, 20. Such a material archive is a matter of interpretation, and it becomes what it is mostly appreciated for – a valuable research resource – in an act of an a posteriori evaluation by someone who instigates it from the outside, who by his/her ability to judge and make decisions activates it to what it is to become, as it were.
and collection maintenance reports. Conservation reports involve a great deal of an artwork’s data related to its physical constitution but frequently also its iconographical analysis and provenance material. Occasionally the documentation of a material analysis (made internally or externally) offers an opportunity to gain a glimpse into the microscopic build-up of a work and its methods. Conservation files regarding a recovered artwork may also include relevant literature and/or its reference and technical information sheets regarding materials used for conservation or implemented in the artwork. The conservation file involves diverse documents related to the cooperation with an artist – artist interviews in written form or in the form of audio and videotapes, diverse files documenting collaboration between artists, their technician or representative and conservation department, and emails of various sorts regarding the work and its installation and meetings minuets. It also involves the documentation of works loaned to other collections or exhibition venues and works borrowed from other museums. Often, the insurance requirements presuppose the production of a condition report on each ‘movement’ of the artwork outside and inside a museum. Especially in the case of ZKM’s extended exhibition practices, its conservation archive contains a vast number of condition reports and photographic records on various stages of works from its own and other collections. The management and surveillance of external commissions for conservation measures that result in written and photographic documentation are also part of a conservation archive. In ZKM, the conservation archive serves as a locus of leftovers from an artwork’s instalments, spare parts, restitution materials, and instructions for assemblage of pieces fabricated in the course of the work’s maintenance or by the artist himself. With regard to contemporary art and art created in situ – site-specific, situation-specific installations, it is not seldom that the conservation department advises the artist on the implementation of materials and thus manages the record and leftovers from diverse trials and tests. Occasionally, elements of works that are not built into the exhibited piece are retained in the conservation lab and often become a part of the material archive of a work. Needless to say, they are highly relevant in relation to material analysis, which may then be conducted on such an element without intervening in the actual work. There is no straightforward answer to question of the accessibility of a conservation archive. Due to the complexity of the stored material and the physical evidence, this archive may be partially accessible in its systematised form of registration files. Sometimes, partial, ‘processed’ information may be transferred to a registration archive and become accessible; at other times, only those with special enquiries are permitted to view the conservation archive.

The department of exhibitions provides a vast amount of contextual information regarding the identity of a work. It might maintain a record of an artwork’s past displays and bibliography, particularly in the case when a work is being loaned from a gallery or the artist for a temporary display and is subsequently acquired. Although it is often the case that the registration department maintains the entire record of an artwork’s acquisition, the exhibition
department might still retain diverse information. Artists’ correspondence, documents related to the context of the planned exhibition and provenience of the artwork, loan negotiations and ephemera such as flyers, exhibition posters and notes, to name just a few. If not included in a separate technical department, this archive may, at times, include floor plans and drawings from the exhibitions, and, occasionally, technical documentation regarding lighting, traffic flow and room capacity. If the exhibition department has a curatorial bias, it may involve curatorial archives that reveal a variety of materials that witness the creation of the exhibition or even an artwork itself, documentary evidence of the often close relationship between the artists and the curator in the form of letters or emails, leftovers, remnants and debris of the partnership and collaborations. Curatorial archives may also include acquisition documents, information about the artists’ galleries, their agents, the donors of the artwork, and its prior owners and exhibitions. In relation to archival research, these bits and pieces of scattered information are most valuable and provide a great deal of insight into the context of the work, artistic attitudes and processes guiding the realisation of a piece or the circumstances of its exhibition or acquisition. Only rarely are they accessible from the outside, especially in the case of archives in which the process of collecting has not yet been accomplished. Under certain circumstances such as the death of the ‘archivist’-curator, curatorial archives may become accessible, after a period of systematisation.40

The archive maintained by the registration department may be, but does not necessarily have to be, the most extensive. Here, the artwork’s entire museum trajectory is registered and regularly updated, including its loans to external exhibition venues, its commission, related to logistical issues such as transport and crating, loan enquiries and insurance data. Furthermore, the issues related to an artwork’s storage in an internal or external depot and all the associated arrangements build up the archival information of the registration department, as is the case at the ZKM. The registration archive delivers a record that provides a good overview of an artwork’s data and is expected to be systematised in a respective order. Ideally, the collection management database is created in conjunction with the registration’s record. Upon request, this part of the registration archive might be accessed for research purposes in the case of external (and internal) inquiries.

The artwork’s life may also be rendered in the form of documentation photography, notes, and completed forms of art handling registers specially designed for this purpose (ZKM). These recordings register different moments of the handling of the artwork, particularly in relation to its placing in a gallery, unpacking, crating or placing in the depot. Interchangeably, these data may also be part of a registration archive, and, in part, a conservation archive, depending on their specific purpose. The issue of the provenience of data registration

40 For instance, the archive of Harald Szeemann acquired in 2011 by The Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles and, at the moment of writing of this thesis, reviewed and classified in order to make it accessible for research.
such as a documentary photograph and the context and purpose for which it was taken is often underappreciated. The photographic documentation originating, for instance, from exhibition, registration, art handling or conservation contexts, may deliver a vast amount of contextual information specific for the purpose for which it was made and later accumulated. To illustrate this, it might be sufficient to mention the specificity of detailed conservation photographs registering the slightest damage on an object’s surface in comparison with the meticulously documented wrapping, securing and crating of the work by an art handling or registration department. The photographic, specific registry of the art handling department is a source of site-related information not only for the condition of a work being unpacked or crated, but also for its location in the exhibition architecture or the handling practices of the institution.

Accordingly, the department of building services may also produce a number of interesting records that are related to the institutional life of an artwork. For instance, the ZKM holds a record linked with the security of the exhibition space. This might be highly relevant to understand how the spatial setting of large-dimensional multimedia installations is affected by factors of security, building maintenance and issues related to, for instance, the illumination of a gallery. Last but not least, archival records of climate control of the museum may also be held at the department of building services.

Institutions that collect media artworks and installations such as the ZKM have established departments in which the technical maintenance of playback and display apparatus takes place. The records of the technical department may be rendered in the conservation archive, but a substantial number of traces, leftovers and technical data is maintained in the registry of the technical department. Ideally, much of the written information is ordered and structured in a digital database shared between the various departments. Furthermore, the digitisation as a common practice in a number of media collections (and often mistaken with their conservation) produces a portion of data that is either rendered locally or becomes part of a databank. Because media art conservation is a young and emerging field, and, in the majority of established institutions the positions of media conservators are nascent, the respective form of an archive still has to be developed. Often the archives of conservation and technical departments are being increasingly fused (not to say confused) in the daily practice of a museum. Last but not least, the audio-visual department may hold the artwork’s video and film carriers including its back-up and/or digitised copies.

The list of such micro archives may be long, depending on the structure and dimension of the institution. Certainly, there are other departments that may offer an interesting insight into the image of an artwork’s life in a museum, including the education department, the public relations department, the office of event management, the archives of diverse research institutes and last but not least, the museum library or in the case of media-oriented institutions – the so-called ‘mediathek’ at the ZKM. In smaller institutions,
the archives may be minimised into the form of a personal archive gathered accordingly to the employee's professional orientation and interests. In looking into diverse archives in a museum one may observe a mechanism that allows one microstructure to permeate another. So, the technical department archive might become part of a conservation archive (ZKM) and the conservation archive part of a registration archive and so forth. It could be said that this interrelation between the micro archive and the institutional archive is similar to the relation between the institutional archive and the larger, cultural archive to which it contributes.41

One more point worthy of mentioning is that whereas it could be said that the ‘messiness’ of the archival structures in relation to a nascent discipline of (new) media conservation and display is somewhat legitimised, a plausible explanation of the blurred boundaries between the departmental archives in various museums appears to be lacking. This is, I believe, due to the drive to classify and organise knowledge on the one hand, and, on the other, the impossibility of the clear classification of archival records in conjunction with the temporal, cultural, economic and political factors that condition it.42

If we reconsider the case of *Arche Noah* in this light, it can be said that research into the artwork’s institutional history was based on internal knowledge of how the micro archives of diverse departments function and what kind of information can be gathered by approaching them. This was facilitated by my professional employment at the museum and the practical involvement in the recovery of the artwork. During the research, *Arche Noah* appeared in many places and forms. The conservation department had a substantial number of photographs and reports regarding the condition in which the artwork was recovered, illustrating an interesting collage of elements that were assembled together largely based on catalogue records and the knowledge of persons acquainted with the work ever since its acquisition. The art handling process, part of the technical department of the ZKM, recorded a large amount of information in the form of photographs and art-handling sheets involving details about the wrapping, crating and securing of the work for its transportation and storage. The registration department housed a number of data about the relocation and lists of works. The technical department created a list of *Arche Noah*’s playback and display equipment, which was stored at an entirely different location, in the museum’s technical storage. Interestingly, here, as is often the case with media installations in large institutions that collect them, the equipment was not reserved exclusively for Paik’s work. Rather, it was used interchangeably with other installations, for example in the re-installations of Marie-Jo Lafontaine’s or Fabrizio Plessi’s

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41 A cultural archive may be understood as a material and conceptual entity enhancing the entire complexity of cultural production.

works. At the beginning of my research for this thesis, the artwork commenced to gradually be identified by picking up all fragments of information from these various places. Although barely documented in the 1990s, the image of Arche Noah began to crystallise through diverse references and approached departments. Seemingly, in these multiple places that carried traces of Arche Noah, the artwork was physically inexistent as something identifiable as Arche Noah, but rather as a conglomeration of elements, disassembled planks, animals and technical equipment in the storage, documents in many archival registries and oral accounts and memories – something truly scattered, diffused and fragmentary. It can be said that Arche Noah’s materialisation as an installation required an active–creative involvement between the conservators and, later, during the test re-installation, between conservators, a curator supported by the technicians and Paik’s assistant. This involvement included archival knowledge used in an interpretative-creative manner in the activation of archival documents as well as tacit knowledge, to which I will turn shortly.

To sum up, the archive described here contradicts the ideal of a centralised, singular locus of documents and materials that may be easily consulted. The archive is, as has been shown at the many micro levels of a museum, dispersed by the nature of a heterogeneous system of institutional departments and their responsibilities, affecting the way in which an artwork’s identity is constructed. In the search for the answer to what the artwork is in the institutional domain of a museum, such an archive instigates the more flexible and multi-locational effort of recovering its different fragments.

This dispersion – or decentralisation – is also reflected in a bigger picture of, say, external space. Because works are being registered not only in their own collection, but also in lending institutions on the occasion of various temporary exhibitions and displays, material traces and various kinds of information may be found externally. When tracing an archive of an artwork, or, in other words, pursuing the research of a particular artwork, one often has to investigate the archives of the author, including his gallery(-s), collaborators, estate, family and friends (Fig. 8.2). The archival research conducted on Arche Noah necessitated consulting various actors that were involved in its trajectory, such as Paik’s assistant Saueracker, and ZKM’s technicians and curators. The archival research for TV Garden was more complex – not only was it located in the archives of three different institutions, but all of those locations

44 Indeed, such a decentralisation affects not only the information gathered during the course of external research, but just as much the research done by domestic personnel, who simply may not find the data within the institution itself.
were bound with different actors involved in its re-installations – Paik's curators Hanhard in the United States, Herzogenrath in Germany, Young Cheol Lee in Korea, Paik’s various technicians and assistants, and galleries and the galleries’ owners involved. The archive appears to be distributed across different continents; its scattered and fragmented nature is particularly apparent. That is to say that it remains in the sphere of impossibility to trace down all the documents of a work that has experienced a rich history of displays and acquisitions. Accordingly, by no means may the investigation of a singular archive of a work become exhaustive; rather, it may provide information on a fragment of its trajectory. This also implies that the reconstruction of an artwork’s trajectory either related solely to its museum’s life or extended to the artistic archive documenting its origins will of necessity always be incomplete and fragmentary. As Foucault put it, the archive is available only in fragments, regions and levels, and not in its totality.\(^4\) Furthermore, an individual who accesses an archive faces not only a vast number of documents but also a lack of documentation. These gaps in archival records may provide valuable information based precisely on what lies beyond the retrievable. A work’s identity is created on the basis of what the archive offers, together with the rupture in its record, its belatedness and heterogeneity. The construction of the identity of a multimedia artwork such as TV Garden is always dependent on the information that is retrievable and accessible – the access to archives being subject to control. It is formed on the basis of the archive filtered through the present cultural context. The interesting question here remains: What do the archives make possible and what do they repress? Is all materiality of an artwork archiveable?

8.4 The System of Accessibility

In my account of diverse micro archives and their role in forming the identity of an artwork in a collection, the issue of their accessibility has already been mentioned. It goes without saying that access to museum archives is highly controlled.\(^4\) First, there is an amount of information that is not meant to percolate outside of the structures of an institution for various political, economical and strategic reasons. Second, the accessibility of the archive is hindered by the

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\(^4\) “The archive cannot be described in its totality. It emerges in fragments, regions and levels, more fully, no doubt, and with greater sharpness, the greater the time that separates it from us. Michael Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 130.

\(^4\) During my research for this thesis, the Paik archives donated by Paik’s estate to the Smithsonian Institute in Washington were not accessible due to the classification they had to undergo. Furthermore, a number of museums guard the content of their archives in order to enable research and publications for their own staff. For access to (preservation) data, see, for instance; Gunnar Heydenreich, "Documentation of Change – Change of Documentation," in *Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks*, ed. Tatja Scholte and Glenn Wharton (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2012), 155-171.
very fragmented, scattered structures of a museum archive.\footnote{For a discussion on the accessibility of the museum archive, see Luis Marie Fink, “Museum Archives as Resources for Scholarly Research and Institutional Identity,” in \textit{New Museum: Theory and Practice; An Introduction}, ed. Janet Marstine (Malden, Oxford, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 292-307.} Lastly, in some museums, the curatorial archive is not accessible to conservators and vice versa. If it does exists, the collection management database often has limited, protected access for different departments.

Let us now examine an extreme example related to the sanctioning of archival content. Rather than with factual data regarding Paik’s installations in their collection, the field research at the Nam June Paik Art Center (October 2012), provided an invaluable insight into the functionalities of the archive. Although, as I suggested, restrictions to accessibility are not entirely unfamiliar to Western museum culture, it was nevertheless surprising that none of the documents accessible for research in a number of museums I approached were available in Seoul.\footnote{In Europe and the US, depending on the museum’s policy, it is often the case that condition reports, information about the artworks regarding their acquisitions, insurance and other data regarded as confidential are not shared.} The archivist in charge legitimised this restriction with a law limiting the access to museum files for research purposes for a time period of ten to fifteen years. This rendered the viewing of documentation or registration files impossible.\footnote{According to the policy “Public Records Management Act” Korean public institutions’ files are protected from any external access that could compromise them. Sang Ae Park, email message to the author, November 5, 2012.} How can research be done under these conditions? To address this issue, I made decision to implement the method of observation and empirical study of the works installed in situ. In an attempt to understand the characteristics of \textit{TV Garden}, for instance, I conducted a number of discussions with the staff that provided a wide range of possibilities for interpretation. These discussions, – as it gradually became clear – delivered another form of data, a part of a non-material archive that will be addressed in the following. One further reflection on the accessibility of archives in conjunction with the research I conducted in Korea and, subsequently, in Japan, was that, even if accessible, the cultural and language barriers would determine their accessibility.

Another aspect of the accessibility of archives refers to the system of storage of the data. In the museum archive the system in which the traces of artworks and documents are stored may became more relevant than their content. One can speak about the topology of the archive, to which the key lies with the authority of an archivist. In the case of the material conservation archive, the conservator takes on the role of a controlling and maintaining power over the topology and content of the archive. The archive is non-homogenous not only in the sense of how it is physically created but in the way it is served by different technologies implemented to accumulate and maintain it.\footnote{The archive reflects the technical and technological status of times in which it is being accumulated. Yet against the promise they bore, the computerisation and digitisation of records failed to contribute to the external accessibility of the archive; only seldom is an external researcher allowed to browse the databank of a museum.} The technology not only changes the process of
archiving but also of the archived content itself.\textsuperscript{52} To be ‘served’ by the archive, as I suggested, one needs to acquire knowledge of its structure and functionality. Only seldom can this be achieved by an individual who deals with the archive on something other than a daily basis and from a position other than the inside of a museum. This is illustrated by two different types of information used for the accounts of Arche Noah and TV Garden. Whereas the former was based on the firsthand experience of the archive from the position of the insider, the latter could only be reconstructed from the information that was made available to me as an external researcher. This is also due to the fact that a large part of the archive is of a different nature than physical or material. This system of the archive, the metadata, as it were, of archival knowledge far beyond the physical system of order in the registry constitutes another – and other than physical – sphere of the archive, which I will discuss shortly. In creating the work’s identity through retrieved records, the accessibility of information plays a very relevant role. If a reconstruction of a work based on archival documents and a museum’s repository is incomplete due to the conditions of accessibility, it will result in subsequent records that may shape the work’s future manifestations. In my account of Arche Noah, the work’s earlier realisation, with and without the plants, and with or without banners, instigated an even greater changeability and further modifications that followed such as Arche Noah’s EnBW version without animals and with plants. It can be maintained, that the accessibility of archival data in multimedia installations shapes the way in which their identity is being constructed, and which, in turn, as we have seen in the example of Paik’s works, enters the archival domain as a possibility for their future materialisations.

To resume, the museum archive and the museum as an archive is an ever-evolving space of various entries and flux of information never at rest, a heterogeneous space of many different access points, which can all create various meanings of objects. It can be said that an interesting part in searching through an archive is the unpredictability of retrieved information – we find always something different than we are looking for\textsuperscript{53} – and that what is to be found in the archive is strictly dependent on the point of entry to it, on the both physical (location) and non-physical levels of access. It is true that the highest challenge in a well functioning archive is the meta-structure of description and linkage that enables the retrieval of the information.\textsuperscript{54} The knowledge of the functionalities of the archive other than physical access is at least as significant as its practical aspects. The archive may unveil its arcana only to those who engage with it on a conceptual level, where the information is being created, the resource is being analysed and where one can learn about the economy of its function. The archive is a dynamic

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{53} Often referred to as ‘serendipity’ of the archive.
\item \textsuperscript{54} This is also why the digitisation of paper archives is very time-consuming due to the network of metadata that must be created to enable the retrieval of the digitised documents.
\end{itemize}
entity and structures as much as documents are created in constant reorganisation, addition and loss. The archive is thus not only the physical realm of papers, files and objects of different kind, but a conceptual realm of thought and interpretation, of tacit and embodied knowledge, and a condition of possibility for a multitude of readings.55

8.5 Beyond the Material Repository: Towards the Virtual and Real

Although the written form is a privileged kind of archival information, it is necessary to question whether an archive can be purely material, and following this, is it merely the material sphere of the archive that shapes the identity of media installations? The written is, according to Groys who recalls Derrida, a process that aims at compensation for the loss of origins, is always insufficient in relation to the statement, and always additive.56

Can we envision a pile of documents and records without any supplementary information, that is, an archivist who knows where to retrieve something, and knows his/her way through corridors filled with drawers that all look the same? Would a conservation or museum archive be possible without its non-physical, non-material sphere? Clearly, archives are activated by their interpretation; yet what is interesting in this context is the archival sphere of non-physicality, in which archives are being constructed, understood and maintained.57

The material archive is a collection of static documents and is only partial without its supplementation by unarticulated, implicit knowledge and memory. Accordingly, even the outermost detailed archival record resting in the physical sphere of archival repository is not complete unless supplemented by implicit knowledge.

To illustrate this, let us shortly return to the example of the test reinstallation of *Arche Noah* in 2008. At the time, *Arche Noah* was documented solely at its disassembled stage recovered two years earlier from the external depot, and with the exemption of a photograph illustrating the work in its shape from the 1990s, neither instructions nor drawings for its installations existed that could be supportive for the reinstallation. A team consisting of conservators and technicians, and Paik’s assistant, Saueracker, was engaged in the process of reassembling the work. To envision the challenge that the team faced, one can only imagine a pile of (unnumbered) slats, beams and bars, fixtures, animals, TV sets and playback equipment lying on a gallery floor. The gradual process of reinstallation took place by adjusting one compilation of supporting beams to another, one set of slats to another, with the traces of their screwing point as guidance. The knowledge was constructed and re-constructed in situ on the

55 Derrida maintains that every archival interpretation is its enrichment, and that is precisely why the archive is an anticipation of the future. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 68 and 18 quoted in Ketelaar, “Tacit Narrative,” 138.
57 In conjunction with the archival research and its objects, Ketelaar goes so far as to maintain that documents and files do not speak for themselves but rather reflect what the researcher wants the documents to say. Depending on generations accessing the archive, the production of meaning is subject to change. Ketelaar, “Tacit Narrative,” 139.
basis of memories of technicians and Saueracker’s nearly twenty-year-old recollection of the installation of *Arche Noah* at Weisses Haus and its subsequent exhibitions in the 1990s. The observation of the team working at the site (and the documentation of the process) leads to the assumption that it was *Arche Noah* emerging as a construction of memories and knowledge at the point of becoming explicit, and the fragmented physicality of the work. The archive appeared as something subjective, carried in the minds of those who knew which elements fit together and how they should be assembled. In a collective effort of those involved, the work’s identity was being constructed on in situ based on data neither accessible nor viewable to any of the team members. By no means is *Arche Noah* the only and extreme example of the non-physical sphere of archival knowledge. In examining other multimedia artworks more closely, museum re-installation practices are only partially based on archival documentation and partially precisely on this non-physical sphere of the archive.

In thinking about archives and their role in shaping the identity of works of art, one has to take into consideration dimensions other than just the material one. Archives are more than physical repositories. Archives exist on another intangible, non-palpable and non-physical level of being,\(^\text{58}\) which is not as many suggest metaphorical, abstract and conceptual; rather, I suggest, it is virtual and real.\(^\text{59}\) The virtual, implicit sphere of an archive is neither fully expressed or demonstrated nor clearly classified. Beyond the privilege of a haptic experience, the virtual sphere of the archive lives its silent existence merely implied. This implicit, virtual sphere of the archive is constituted by subject-oriented tacit knowledge, memory, non-embodied skills (yet not excluding the relation between body and mind), competencies, and system of knowledge concerning the retrieval of information that is not being formulated in any form of written instruction (this may involve retrieving the information in the physical archive). The link between the non-physical sphere of the archive and its tangible form lies in the potentiality of the former to become the latter in the process of explication and formulation. I will explain the concept of virtual and real in the discussion of actualisation in section 9.3. Akin to the physical archive, the virtual archival dimension is constituted by a rhizome of interconnected terminals and permeating spheres and is crucial in creating the identity of artworks. Accordingly, until the time of its re-installation, *Arche Noah* was inexistential as a physical object; rather, it existed in the virtual dimension of the archive.

Worth mentioning in this context is the concept of the archive and the repertoire put forward by Diana Taylor from the perspective of performance studies. Expanding on the notion of knowledge, Taylor posits that the archival document must be supplemented by embodied cultural practices such as ritual, dance and cooking, which is not considered knowledge.\(^\text{60}\) My concept of the non-physical archive and Taylor’s repertoire share their

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\(^{58}\) Non-physical meaning not having a material existence that one could independently consult.

\(^{59}\) For the idea of virtual and real, see Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 96-98.

\(^{60}\) Taylor, ”The Archive and the Repertoire,” 16-32.
unquestionable necessity of existence in order for the art forms to endure (both performance and multimedia) and the insufficiency of there being a physical archive alone. For Taylor, the repertoire enacts embodied memory and all sorts of ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge. Although similar in the involvement of people as ‘transmitters’ of the knowledge, my understanding of the non-physical sphere of the archive assumes the act of actualisation, which takes place on the basis of both the physical and non-physical archive to be discussed shortly (in section 9.4).

8.6 The Non-Physical Dimension of the Archive: Memory and Tacit Knowledge

During the research for this thesis, the most eminent encounter with the virtual dimension of an archive took place in Harayuku, Tokyo, at the Watari-um Museum of Contemporary Art. My interview with Etsuko Watari, the daughter of Paik’s then most prominent mentor and gallery owner in Japan, Shikusho Watari, revealed that in fact knowledge of Paik and his artworks in their collection resides solely in the Watari family’s memory. Paik was regarded as a family member; the relationship between him and the Wataris was close and resulted in spontaneous events, long telephone calls and the creation of works that were never palpably documented. Indeed such documentation was not possible – a situation common between family members. For a long time, retaining its status as a gallery, Watari-Um only became a museum in the 1990s. This is also one of the reasons the knowledge about the artworks including their number, components, mode of assembly and further characteristics has never been captured in written form. Rather it has been passed on as oral accounts and will cease to exist once the person who ‘knows’ it passes away.

Memory is related to a capacity to remember, and to collect and recall experiences and knowledge. One can speak of a good or bad memory and its instability according to the degree with which we are able to recall things. As I suggested in section 8.1, scholars have related memory to the archive, primarily discussing the memory in contrast to its physical dimension, but also emphasising the role of the archive in constructing cultural memory.

The issue of memory in the virtual sphere of the archive may be illustrated using the example of Sigmund Freud’s analysis of a Mystic Writing Pad. In his essay A Note Upon the Mystic Writing Pad (1925), Freud discerns between the materialised portion of his mnemonic apparatus as a permanent memory trace and the sphere engraved in the deeper level of his

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61 Ibid.
62 Etsuko Watari (curator of Watari-Um), in discussion with the author, October 2012.
consciousness.\(^\text{64}\) To visualise his example and explain the function of the layered system of the perceptual apparatus of the human mind, Freud recalls the technique of ancient writing on tablets of clay or wax and their modern translation in the contrivance of the 'Mystic Writing Pad.'\(^\text{65}\) And although Freud’s assertion is closely related to the sphere of the human mind, I nevertheless propose to implement the example of a Mystic Writing Pad to my concept of the archive. The pad is well known as a children’s toy. To use the pad, one has to inscribe a note using a pointed tool or a fingernail on the plastic covering sheet that rests on a thick waxen board. The notes are rendered removable by lifting the covering sheet away from the board. It is the contact between the sheets that renders the note visible in the form of dark traces. Now, have the notes been removed entirely? If one inspects the deeper layer, the notes still exist but do not manifest on the surface. In my concept of the virtual sphere of the archive, the Mystic Writing Pad has a metaphorical function. Its deeper layer, which preserves the notes despite new inscriptions on its surface, may stand for a deep sphere of the memory of an archive, and, as a consequence, proving that there can never be not a physical trace. New inscriptions and practices of re-installations of artworks constantly supplement the archive and, consequently, the deep virtual archival level grows continuously in response to them. There is a dark side to this growth, however. The ever-expanding body of archival information and inscriptions may stifle the artwork, blocking future possibilities of its materialisation. Archival erasure and making room for new experiences might enable a certain freshness necessary to any reconstruction.

Memory relates to tacit knowledge – a next crucial point in my discussion on the virtual sphere of the archive – in the way it renders the recollection possible. Furthermore, the memory in its orientation towards the past is distinct from tacit knowledge, which is in present, or rather is in the process of constant becoming.\(^\text{66}\) The notion of tacit knowledge has been scrutinised by the historian and philosopher of science Michael Polanyi and his heirs.\(^\text{67}\) Polanyi maintains that knowledge exists that fails to be articulated by verbal means. As opposed to explicit knowledge that is formulated in words, numbers and figures, tacit knowledge has not been codified, and is subjective and related to experience. The transfer of explicit knowledge may take place by sharing data, specifications and procedures and stand in opposition to tacit knowledge, which is difficult to capture. Most importantly for my later argument, however, Polanyi posits that all knowledge is rooted in tacit knowledge. If we were to accept this proposition, the logical consequence would lead to the statement that the archive


\(^{65}\) Freud, “A Note Upon the Mystic Writing-Pad,” 21.

\(^{66}\) This distinction somewhat echoes the Deleuzian discussion on the pure ontological memory and its relation to the virtual. Deleuze, Bergsonism.

is rooted in tacit knowledge on the basis of which it becomes explicated in written narratives. Contrary to propositional knowledge, tacit knowledge is contained in statements that express its personal nature, for example: ‘I believe...’ ‘something tells me... ’ The tacit dimension of this knowledge is captured by one of Polanyi’s famous formulations that ‘we know more than we can tell.’

Scientific models cannot contain tacit knowledge due to their nature – it is being ‘known’ without being articulated. Tacit knowledge is disclosed in the judgements of the person who possesses it, thus it is always personal and related to the person who ‘knows it.’ Because tacit knowledge is constituted by the relationship between the person who knows and that what is being known, it is not simply transferable. In conservation studies, tacit knowledge was introduced by Ijsbrand Hummelen and Tatja Scholte in relation to the preservation and presentation of ephemeral artworks in museums. In the essay ‘Sharing Knowledge for the Conservation of Contemporary Art: Changing Roles in a Museum Without Walls?’ (2004), we are introduced to the role of the unspoken procedures, unformulated in documentation, that are crucial in conservation practices linked with contemporary art. Hummelen and Scholte suggest that by means of capturing diverse information in the course of the re-installation or production of a work of art, the transmission of the meaning of an artwork and the artist’s intentions can be obtained. So, rather than remaining in the realm of the unspoken and unformulated, the implicit knowledge of installation techniques, instruments used and implemented methods is being eventually externalised, transmitted by way of a written recount. All in all, the value of their contribution lies in the recognition of the significance of tacit knowledge in conservation, even though in their essay it eventually shifts to the explicated form of conservation documentation.

With particular relation to the concept of the archive presented in this thesis, tacit knowledge is not transferable to a written domain. That is not to say that the tacit knowledge has not yet de facto been written, but rather that it refuses formulation per nature. The written is a place reserved for explicit knowledge, so that the allocation of the knowledge in the document renders it of necessity explicit. In everyday museum practice, there is a dimension of the archive in which we – as creators and ‘users’ – are tacitly engaged, but which stays beyond what is, so to say, consciously knowable. In the archive, tacit knowledge constitutes the meta-level of archival awareness and encompasses a range of issues starting from simple practicalities of locating and storing information to gaining the complex knowledge of an artwork’s and a collection’s function and meaning. Often, it is concealed from direct observation and introspection. So for example, if a member of a conservation department receives an instruction from the artist related to the installation of his work to be displayed in an upcoming exhibition, the record is classified and printed or stored in a respective folder in the registry or in a databank. These records are retrievable by means of a set of actions

68 Ibid., 4.
69 Hummelen and Scholte, “Sharing Knowledge.”
internally known, yet rarely articulated or rendered in written form. It also sets off a range of actions that are not related to the archive – a head of department is consulted, a technician is informed and preparation for the incorporation of the instruction is undertaken. As Polanyi puts it, ‘in an act of knowing we attend from something to attending to something else; namely, from the first term to the second term of tacit relation.’ Without conscious attention, actions are being undertaken and records are being formed and deposited in a certain way. When the work requires technical assistance – the update of a format, a particular cabling, the adjustment of a plug to local standards or the calibration of display apparatus, the related data and resources are retrievable in various locations and with the help of various specialists in the museum. The system of such retrieval is an internal tacit knowledge that is inherent to the professionals of a particular museum in which the archive is located. This often comes to the fore when a new person is introduced to the departmental team; his/her knowledge about the functionalities of a department and archive may only be built up gradually and in line with his/her own attitude that is developed during the course of familiarisation with the system.

Tacit knowledge is constituted by (non-embodied, virtually present) skills, attitudes and social relations of persons involved in creating the archive. If we were to think about the object and its environment as an ecological system – a system involving organisms and their environment and all sorts of relations and interactions – this sphere of the archive would involve what Guattari classifies as social, mental and environmental ecologies. The issues of institutional hierarchy and social relations, just like the mental constitutions of persons involved (affection or disapproval) and environmental circumstances, would shape the knowledge about the work. The emotional dimension of the archive is manifested by the way in which records are gathered and how specialists approach the artwork. For example, and despite the conservation premise that all objects should be treated with the same degree of attention, the presence of personal preferences of those involved in the re-creation or installation of a work cannot be denied. These preferences can have an enormous impact on the way works are handled and shaped. This results in a significant role that ought to be assigned to the attitudes of actors that engage with the artworks and with the archive that ‘records’ them. Accordingly, although part of an institution and supposedly objective and impartial, the archive never remains unbiased or detached from personal factors. The papier-mâché animals that make up part of Arche Noah, for example, on the occasion of the EnBW exhibition were dismissed not only on the grounds of financial burden to conserve them prior to the installation. In circumstances when a judgement was required and no instructions exited, the decisions involved their estimation as an inartistic product of child’s play. Based on subjective tacit knowledge, judgements and the implementation of phronesis – practical

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71 Guattari, “The Three Ecologies.”
knowledge discussed in section 9.2 – the decisions made for the reinstallation of *Arche Noah* dramatically shaped its appearance.

Tacit knowledge, being personal, belongs to and characterises those who possess it. This is another reason why it is impossible for the archive, both on its virtual and its physical level, to be conceptualised as something centralised. Both tacit and explicit knowledge are by nature dispersed. In the purview of tacit knowledge, and expanding the archive beyond a museum, it may be said that the archive is constituted by an atomised knowledge of many individuals.

The tacit knowledge of the artwork that becomes part of the archive is not only related to the functionalities of a museum. It is the entire range of persons involved in the re-installation of a work that shapes the archival content. Artist’s assistants, curators and technicians of artists’ estates are all in possession of implicit knowledge which, remaining unformulated, manifests itself in the ways of practical dealings with artworks. In my professional experience, I have often encountered this type of tacit knowledge that refused to become explicable on any formal level. While observing the test reinstallation of *Arche Noah*, for instance, Paik’s assistant Saueracker responded to our questions related to his method and reason for decisions that were being made with the formulation ‘one just has to understand how Paik worked.’ The tacit knowledge of Paik’s long-term collaborator refuses to be grasped by the way of experiencing his work, and only an intensive engagement with his practices, attitudes and methods may give an impression of its impact on re-installation procedures. Here, the process of ‘black boxing’ put forward by the French philosopher and sociologist Bruno Latour may help us understand the situation and link us again to the issue of accessibility.72 In the result of a sociological process, professionals and institutions hide detailed information about the object and processes, once they become obvious to insiders. Yet there is another side to this. For Saueracker – and similarly for others involved with the artist’s oeuvre – maintaining the arcane mystery also signifies making it an exclusive right. Ensuring his engagement with Paik’s oeuvre posthumously bears an economic and perhaps even narcissistic motive. Of importance here is to draw a line between the mystified and the real. The real aspects of tacit knowledge such as skills and attitudes should be discerned from the mystifying ones detectable in a generalised statement such as ‘that is how Paik would do it.’

8.7 Conservation Narrative in Between Archival Realms

As I have shown, venturing into the archives inside and outside of a museum, the archive is a space of enclosure of diverse factual data, documentation narratives, description of materiality and leftovers of works, but, equally, oral accounts, tacit knowledge, skills and the competencies of those involved in shaping the trajectories of works. In the words of Sven

Spieler, the archive oscillates between embodiment and disembodiment, composition and decomposition, organisation and chaos. In these ‘in between spaces’ of the immaterial and physical archive and in its zeal to collect knowledge about the artworks, conservation plays a crucial role. In fact, with the rise of new, concept-based art forms and multimedia installations, the documentation of these art forms began to stand metonymically for their conservation. Conservation produces the record for the archive and bases its decision on the archival record in a reciprocal, continuous exchange. Yet, as I suggested, there is a dimension of the archive that lies beyond the physical repository. This virtual dimension has a major impact on shaping the identity of artworks and is formed by tacit knowledge and memory.

This is the point where I propose to return to the notion of the conservation narrative, which, so far, has functioned to merge various temporalities in which and as which artworks exist (see section 7.9). Conservation, just like archival intervention, has to do with storytelling that accompanies the activation of the record. Both tacit knowledge and memory, but also physical records are related to storytelling – the conservation narrative – on different levels of its creation. Although tacit knowledge can never, as I suggested, become fully explicated, there are certain levels of formulation on which it is encoded in the language of a conservation report and documentation. When writing a report, a conservator gives his/her personal perspective and affect (liking or apathy towards the object, for instance), translates his/her skills and abilities, makes the work of an interpretation. Rephrasing Appadurai, conservation narrative becomes a ‘deliberate project’ of imagination and interpretation, an amalgam of translation of the physical and virtual sphere of the archive on different levels of formalisation. In collecting, classifying and interpreting traces, conservation narrative deprives the archive of its naivety and transforms the pile of loosely connected documents. The factor of naivety is – according to the American historian Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi – crucial for every collection of documents in order for them to be interpreted. Because an archive is only available in fragments, regions and levels, the conservation narrative is based on interpretation of this archive and thus never objective. The relation between conservation narrative and the archive is reciprocal – conservation narratives also become a part of the archive and form it. On the one hand, the conservation narrative draws from the archive to be formulated, basing its content on archival traces and documents, and, on the other, it contributes to the archive, itself becoming part of the archive. Thus conservation narrative establishes a sense of history of the time and circumstances in which it is created.

73 Spieker, The Big Archive, xi.
74 For storytelling in the engagement with the archive, see Ketelaar, “Tacit Narrative,” 139-140.
75 Appadurai uses the formulation ‘deliberate project’ in relation to his concept of the archive. Appadurai, The Big Archive.
CHAPTER 9.
Archival Implications

9.1 Archive in Perspective

The knowledge of the material and immaterial archive enables us to move to the most crucial aspect in the relationship between the archive and the identity of an artwork. The archive both as a physical repository and the virtual sphere constitutes what the work is in the present and entails a potentiality for its future. It does so in the process of actualisation based on conservation's creative involvement. Moreover, the archival potentiality for the various actualisations of the artwork acts retroactively. Every present actualisation enriches the archival potentiality and spawns the artwork's subsequent actualisations. So, rather than something static and distant, the archive becomes amalgamated with the work and becomes part of it, so much so that, as I will show, in relation to particular works, the archive itself becomes an artwork. Questioning the exclusiveness of such a relationship, and presenting the reader with the final archival implication of this chapter, I examine a case when an artwork becomes the archive of its own self, enclosing the trace and material record of its lifespan.

In this chapter, I will venture into the ways the archival 'content' is being used and what implications the involvement with the material and immaterial archive has for the reinstallation of multimedia artworks. I will shortly explore how reinstallations relate to the archival record under the consideration of decision-making guided by practical knowledge. In order to explain how multimedia artworks become materialised, I will argue that the transition from the virtual to the material takes place in the process of actualisation. In this process, conservation plays a major role. Lastly, I will show how the archive holds an answer to the problem of the duality of concept and materialisation and how the identity of artworks is sustained by the archive.

9.2 Archival Judgements

The reinstallation of multimedia artworks takes place on the basis of physical and virtual archives. In practice, the process preceding the installation commences with the consultation of various archival resources – artist's instructions and interviews, photographic and textual
documentation, reports of various kinds and all material evidence. Human resources – curators, conservators, technicians and, if possible, artists’ living assistants and persons engaged in the work’s earlier realisations – are mobilised. These actors activate their knowledge and skills drawing from memory and translating their subjective tacit knowledge into the palpable domain. At the moment of the re-installation of a multimedia work, the role of conservators is essential. The knowledge of the archival system and the selection of information from the quantity that rests in the archive are subject to judgment and sanctioning, meaning permission dependent on context. Decisions are made on the basis of the archive, regardless of whether the artist is living or not. It is, however, not just a one-way process of judgements being made in order to activate particular knowledge and documents from the archive. Conservation also has the ability to judge which information may enter the archive to become a potential basis for future re-installations of an artwork. In this respect we may question the principle guiding such judgements and the possible set of rules and laws governing them.

Despite the way it has sought to distance itself in recent decades from the tradition of restoration, conservation lacks rules and laws governing re-installation and documentation practices. Frequently, decisions are being made on the basis of former decisions documented and registered in archival records or embodied in practices of actors acquainted in various ways with artistic oeuvres. The facts are being interpreted on the basis of rational thinking with knowledge encompassing conservation tenets, ethics and its practical implementation. Such practical knowledge, I suggest, guides the decision-making in conservation and legitimates the justification of what is being drawn from and what has contributed to the archive. Let us now look into the origins of the notion of practical knowledge.

Practical knowledge – Phronesis – was introduced by Aristotle in his Nicomachean Ethics (350 BC). In his analysis of wisdom and intellectual virtues, Aristotle draws a distinction between theoretical wisdom, sophia, an ability to discern reality and episteme, a knowledge which is built up logically and teachable. Accordingly, phronesis is a capability of rational considerations that can deliver palpable effects. Much in line with conservation’s role in judgements in relation to the archive, phronesis involves the ability to decide how to achieve a certain end. But more than a sheer skill (technê), it is also the ability to reflect upon good ends, in Aristotelian terms consistent with ‘good living.’ Placing sophia higher than phronesis on the scale of wisdom, Aristotle contends that the highest pursuit of wisdom requires both, for phronesis facilitates sophia. Although the Aristotelian proposition elucidates the kind of practical knowledge adapted by conservation, I propose to have a closer look into the issue of judgement related to the reinstallation of artworks.

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In conservation of multimedia art, the kind of judgement implemented is that of a reflective judgement. The term ‘reflective judgment’ comes from Kant.\(^78\) Whereas the determinative or subsumptive judgment of knowledge subordinates the particular to the concept, the reflective judgment of aesthetic and teleological judgment starts with the particular and seeks the concept to fit it, on the basis of the agreement of the community or ‘common sense’ (sensus communis). So when we say ‘this is beautiful,’ we anticipate the possible agreement of other people, rather than it being a purely individual taste, yet it is an agreement based first of all on the sensuous experience of something particular, rather than a universal concept. It is a matter of starting with the particular and applying judgment in the context of a social discourse to find the rule that fits it, rather than starting with the rule and applying it top-down.

The reflective judgement in conservation may be compared with what the German philosopher and Heidegger’s contemporary Hannah Arendt understood as practical (as opposed to theoretical) reason. Combining the Aristotelian and Kantian notions of judgment, Arendt posits that phronesis is a forerunner of the notion of judgement as an ability to measure proportions in political and artistic matters.\(^79\) For Arendt, phronesis has to do with judgment in a particular situation. Similarly, in legal theory, the law itself cannot determine its application for which a judge and jury is necessary. The council decides whether and which law applies to the situation and whether there possibly are mitigating circumstances. For instance, in the British system, preceding cases themselves become part of the law. Similarly, conservation decisions based on the archive and shaping of an artwork’s identity are based on judgements implementing not only rational and practical knowledge, but preceding decisions. For instance, *Arche Noah*’s lost video footage seen initially on the set of monitors placed on the floor at Weisses Haus (closed-circuit video feed of the neighbouring canal in Hamburg) has not been questioned ever since *Arche Noah* lost its site specificity. Similarly, the set of plants is now perceived as intrinsic to *Arche Noah*’s composition. Hypothetically, the plants have a good chance to become a permanent element of *Arche Noah*’s future installations, contrary to the animals, whose absence during the two re-installations in 2008 and 2009 renders them a variable in future decisions. The aspect of judgement in the adaptation of *TV Clock, Moon is the Oldest TV, Arche Noah and TV Garden* in relation to spatial conditions is addressed in section 5.6. From a slightly different angle, if we recall the Stedelijk Museum curator’s wish to replace *TV Buddha*’s statue with a similar one in order to be able to display it in a climatically non-tempered exhibition space (see section 2.2), his judgements approximated a wide range of cases whereby multimedia installations became divorced from the particular physicality.

\(^78\) Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), sections 4-7 and 74-75.

of sculptural and/or technical elements, Paik’s *TV Garden* being an example. In this context it is also worth recalling Paik encouraging Vitiello to ‘use his judgement’ while installing *TV Garden* (see section 1.2). At this point, we will shortly return to the story of *Canopus*. As I pointed out, the reconstruction of the hubcap was not feasible due to the value assigned to the painted inscriptions; yet, at the same time, and based on experiences drawn from similar cases, *Canopus*’ monitors, chassis and playback device (together with the data) were modified entirely and/or replaced. Perhaps a precedent case would allow circumventing the preservation of the historic material by reconstructing the *Wirkung* of the work, rather than favouring a fetish, as it were. Certainly, from the perspective of contemporary multimedia installations, the complicating factor in making decisions is clearly the impossibility of applying old scenarios and principles known from traditional works. While the codex continues to be developed, judgements increasingly rely on comparative methods, study and decisions made in comparable cases.

To resume, in its judgements and interpretations of the archive, conservation relies neither solely on the scientific knowledge of general truths nor on sheer technical know-how, but, rather, links knowledge, virtue and reason. Accordingly, in deciding what is specific on the basis of the archive, conservation balances the proportion of technē and episteme, and contextualises them to the situation of the temporal present. It does so, as I will show in the next section, while actualising the work of art from the archive.

### 9.3 From the Virtual to the Actual

In the pervious chapters I have argued that an artwork may be realised in a number of instantiations, which have an impact on its changeable character. In my concept of the archive in relation to the identity of artworks and addressing the potential of artworks to change, I will use the dialectic of the virtual and actual derived from the philosophical projects of Bergson and Deleuze. This will help me in my argument to move away from the constraints of realisation, which is related to possibility rather than potentiality as explained in the following. The dialectic of virtual and actual resonates what has already been argued regarding the non-physical sphere of the archive and the potentiality, which lies in its actualisation to the physical sphere.

The idea of the coexistence of virtualities and actualities is rooted in Bergsonian philosophy and the differentiation that has been discussed by Deleuze in relation to the

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80 *Preserving the Immaterial.*

81 My idea of the practical knowledge of conservation leans on the argument of David Coulter and John R. Wiens, who, in explaining the notion of phronesis in relation to Aristotle and Kant, maintain that the phronesis is not simply knowledge, but an amalgam of knowledge, virtue and reason that enables people to decide what they should do. David Coulter and John R. Wiens, "Educational Judgement: Linking the Actor and the Spectator," *Educational Researcher* Vol. 31, No. 4. (2002): 16.
notion of possibility and virtuality.\textsuperscript{82} Possibility refers to the somehow already known physical state of before; its realisation presupposes a certain form. The difference that Bergson draws between something real and something possible becomes manifest while observing that the real action has already passed, and the possible action has not (yet).\textsuperscript{83} The process of realisation presupposes the dependence on limitation and resemblance, where the image of the possible that is being realised must be mirrored in the real. The exception here is the concept itself – where the difference between the possible and the real does not apply. Therein, as Deleuze observes, lies the problem. In the realisation, only some ‘possibles’ ‘pass’ to the real, while others are repulsed due to the implied limitation.\textsuperscript{84} The pre-existence of the possible, its preformed, ready-made form passes over to existence following the order of successive limitations.\textsuperscript{85} In contrast, virtuality lacks the pre-existence in any possible form, but exists, rather, in a state of potentiality lying in the sphere of the unknowable.\textsuperscript{86} Both virtual and actual states are real states. Following the Deleuzian thought, it might be argued that the states in which artworks exist in the archive are virtual and real (without being actual and ideal, and without being abstract). Because the virtual does not have to be realised but actualised, it follows the rules of difference and creation, rather than of limitation and resemblance.\textsuperscript{87} There is another consequence that Deleuze points to. While the real resembles the possible that it realises, the actual is not the resemblance of the embodied virtual.\textsuperscript{88} Eventually, turning against the concept of the possible as a false problem, Bergson bases his notion of evolution precisely on the transfer between the virtual and the real.\textsuperscript{89} Additionally – and highly significant for the purpose of my argument – he, too, equates the actualisation with the creation.\textsuperscript{90}

Following the Bergsonian dialectic of the virtual and the actual, the virtual, as a pure qualitative differentiation, might be seen as equivalent to the potential for changeability of works drawn from the archive. This takes place on the basis of all the differences in the works’

\textsuperscript{82} For Bergson, the idea of difference stands for the understanding of duration, which may reveal itself in one of its aspects or nuances: ‘Duration is what differs, and what differs is no longer what differs from something else but what differs from itself. What differs has become itself a thing, a substance. … Real time is alteration, and alteration is substance. Difference in nature is thus no longer between two things or rather two tendencies, difference of nature is itself a thing, one tendency opposing itself to the other.’ Deleuze, Bergsonism, 97.

\textsuperscript{83} For further elaboration on this matter related to Cage’s musical theory, see Branden W. Joseph, “Chance, Indeterminacy, Multiplicity,” in The Anarchy of Silence: John Cage and Experimental Art, Yve-Alain Bois at al. (Barcelona: Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 2010), 223.

\textsuperscript{84} Deleuze, Bergsonism, 97.

\textsuperscript{85} Bergson ends up suggesting that, in fact, it is not the real that resembles the possible but the possible that resembles the real, because it has been extracted from the real ‘like a sterile double.’ He later dismisses the notion of the possible in favour of the virtual, continuing, however, to base the discussion on their dialectic. Deleuze, Bergsonism, 96-98.

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 97.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 98.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
virtual quality at the moment of its actualisation. Conservators carry not only the responsibility for this transfer, but are of necessity creatively involved in the process of actualisation which is, as we have learned from Bergson, by nature, creative. The virtual presence of an artwork in the archive awaits its actualisation anew as one of the many virtual potentialities. The actualisation will never outperform the potentiality involved in the virtual. This potential for many different actualisations inherent to an artwork’s virtual quality and ready to unfold on the basis of the archive is nothing other that the artwork’s inherent changeability (see chapter 5). In other words, what we perceive as the changeability of artworks may become their potentiality to differentiation within their virtual quality embodied in the process of transformation from the virtual to the actual.

The archival form of a multimedia artwork, its virtual form, will thus stand for its identity, an identity that persists through time and notwithstanding the changeability of its various actualisations to which it is open. It accepts no linearity and no sense of pro- or regression, rendering each actualisation of an artwork equally significant. The openness of an artwork to changeability guarantees on the one hand the occurrence of future actualisations based on and drawing from the virtual type, and on the other, the constant enhancement of the characteristics of type through its continuous actualisations. Hence, in its heterogeneous quality and temporal equivalence, the archive accommodates both the virtual type ready to be actualised, and the (historical and evidential) token of its actualisations.91

One last consequence of the dialectic of the virtual and real, and of the concept of actualisation, relates to its placement in the present. The actualisation from the archive takes always place in the present and thus has an obligation solely to the present. Here, it is relevant to recall the Bergsonian virtual past as in or co-extensive with the present as discussed in Bergsonism. For Bergson and Deleuze the past is not behind the present on a line of time, but rather it co-exists with it as shown by the example of the cone: if the present was not already the past as well, and the past present, the present would not have become the past (see section 6.4). From a different perspective, the actualisation of the archive might be seen as a driving force behind what Doane names “presencing” of the past moment through the expansion of its length to present.92 It is, in other words, the process of the actualisation of the past as a form of experience of the present. This has two implications: first, archivisation is equivalent

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91 The concept of type and token stems from analytic aesthetics. Richard Wolheim introduces a distinction between type and token designating realisations of object – tokens, and the ideas – types, or, in traditional words, the one between singular and multiple arts. Richard Wollheim, Art and its Objects (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Linda Wetzel, Types and Tokens: On Abstract Objects (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2009), 3; Jerrold Levinson, ed., The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). My idea of the virtual type expands this view with the perspective of the archive and archival actualisation. In conjunction with the discussion on time in chapter 6 related to the aspect of the artwork’s existence in the present, and for a reformulation of the ‘temporal equivalence’ it could be said that the type may be constituted by tokens of many different pasts, type here being a virtual palimpsest of a work’s multiplicity.

92 Doane, The Emergence of Cinematic Time, 83.
with the process of deactivation from being in the present, a sort of loss of an actual state; second, actualisation is, of necessity, always something new, something that has emerged by creation.

9.4 Archival Actualisation: Back to Creative Conservation?

Increasingly in recent installation practices the archive has become a realm of creative implementation of conservators’ competence and knowledge. This is best observed through the examples of multimedia artworks that incorporate perishable, restituable and ephemeral materials manifest in Paik's works imposing continuous cycles of exchangeability and re-arrangements. The creative qualities of conservator's activities in drawing from and contributing to the archive are different to those of artists involved in the creation of a work. The point here may lie in the differentiation between creation and re-creation, the latter meaning archival actualisation.

That this creative side of conservation and restoration has for decades been banned from the day-to-day repertoire of conservators' and restorers' activities may be reminiscent of the famous Brandian prohibition of entering the 'restricted sphere of the creative process.'93 The roots for such a restriction might be sought in the fact that before conservation had achieved a status of a science, it was a craft where artists, artistic restorers or craftsmen ‘refreshed’ or ‘re-created’ an artwork (of his/her, or of others) by overpainting it or adding new elements in the place of those lost to the sculpture.94 A first sign towards the move away from creative intervention might be seen in Capitolato (1777) by the Italian Director of Restoration of Public Paintings in Venice, Pietro Edwards. He formulated a set of norms prohibiting the removal of old inpaintings and proclaimed the area of lacunae as the only location where new inpaintings were allowed to occur.95 Furthermore, highly relevant for the development of conservation as a discipline known today and linked with its withdrawal from any creative actions was the activity of the Austrian and German art historians Alois Riegl and Gregor Dehio. Riegl's taxonomy of monument's values provided one of the clearest observations in the interpretation of the identity of tangible heritage, which, due to the spatial restrictions of this thesis, cannot be pursued further here. What is very interesting in relation to the creative aspects of the profession is that Dehlio and Riegl advocated conservation instead of restoration. I believe that the shift in taxonomy from ‘restoration’ to ‘conservation’ reflects the tendency to divorce the profession from its creative aspects. Somewhat emerged from the romantic cult of decay and age in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the critique of restoration

93 Brandi, Theory of Restoration, 62.
94 The Laokoön group being a prominent example; see also chapter 6.
was most extensively expressed in Ruskin’s *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849). Ruskin believed that restoration falsifies the object – a relic of a past that communicates with the future – and renders the sign of history as the most valuable feature of an object unreadable. Viollet-le-Duc instead, was a proponent of a permissive – if not creative – attitude towards reconstructions (see Introduction and section 6.2). As suggested, Viollet-le-Duc believed that restoration should be a process in which a building is reinstated in a condition of completeness which might never have existed at any given time. This implies a creative aspect of such a restoration relevant from the point of view of Voilla-le-Duc’s revived reception in my thinking. The conservator Hanna Jędrzejewska had already acknowledged conservation’s interpretative abilities in 1976. She wrote: "The whole work of a conservator is a constant sequence of interpretations, as this is what guides his decisions and procedures." These interpretative aspects are reconfirmed by Helen Glanville, who, in the commentary to Conti’s *The History of the Restoration and Conservation of Works of Art* (1988), writes: ‘restoration cannot but modernise, interpreting according to its own frames of reference, so that these re-creations tell us more about the time in which they were carried out that the times and concerns of the original artist.’ In criticising preservation as a process of rendering works’ relics and thus disabling new creation, Lowenthal sees a burden that disables a creative use of the past stating that ‘we further isolate what we preserve.’ This critique clearly addresses the dismissal of creativity in conservation, which is focused on saving properties and artefacts rather than ideas and culture. The idea of creativity in conservation is taken one step further by D.E. Cosgrove, who claims that in performing acts that intervene in the life of object, conservation may be regarded as ‘creative intervention, subject to the same individual and social negotiations and struggles over meaning and representation as any other action.’ In more recent writings, the turn towards the acknowledgement of conservation as a creative profession is already recognisable in Muñoz Viñas *Contemporary Theory of Conservation* in

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99 Hanna Jędrzejewska, *Ethics in Conservation* (Stockholm: Kungl. Konsthögskolan Institutet för Materialkunskap, 1976), 41 quoted in Clavir, *Preserving What is Valued*, 41. According to Clavir, the interpretative capacity of conservation has been acknowledged by other authors such as Keyser and Weil. Ibid.
100 Glanville, "Introduction," xxi. My emphasis.
102 Ibid.
Archival Implications

which he points to the issue of the ‘fabrication of heritage’ and postulates for conservation to become a ‘creative activity’.

With its roots in history, conservation has been marked by taboos and restrictions, following Nietzsche’s apt observation that a profession is characterised precisely by things that its practitioner is forbidden to do. Yet with multimedia installations, we are no more able to sustain the claim of the withdrawal from creative intervention in artworks, for every actualisation or reinstallation necessarily involves creative aspects. This is confirmed by the many examples of Paik’s works – Zen for Film, Arche Noah, TV Garden, to name but a few – scrutinised in this thesis. That is not to say that the creativity of conservation appeared only with these types of media; rather, creativity has always been present in conservation in the way it tells stories about its objects (conservation narratives), interpreting and actualising them to the temporal and cultural context of the time in which it operated. Moreover, the creative aspects of conservation often became manifest in the many transferred murals, lined, reframed and re-contextualised paintings and sculptures that populate our museums. It could thus be said that the creative aspects of conservation were not an invention of postmodernity, but became more explicit with the introduction of multimedia and contemporary works governed by the logic of recurrent materialisations and engagement with the archive.

The shape of conservation has not morphed entirely from the asceticism of holding back with its instruments and methods in confrontation with the supposed ‘original;’ rather, it crystallised and sharpened itself facing the openness of artworks to change in much shorter, condensed ranges of time (see also section 7.4). To paraphrase Latour’s famous postulate – we have always, in that sense, been creative. It may be said that the practices of multimedia installation taught conservation to express its creative side with more convenience.

104 He refers to the fabrication of heritage as a result of a subjective ‘act of taste’ and the denial of objectivity in conservation. Furthermore, according to him, conservation might be seen as ‘creative activity’ whereas creativity is not only permissible in conservation, but desirable. Muñoz Viñas, Contemporary Theory of Conservation, 112-113 and 147-150. For the juxtaposition of ‘pure conservation’ and ‘creative approach’ see also Honório Nicholls Pereira, “Contemporary Trends in Conservation: Culturalization, Significance and Sustainability.” City and Time 3/2 (2007): 22-23.


106 Examples of conservation’s creative engagement may be seen in architectural conservation, for instance in the practices of Anastilosis, which aimed at the restitution of the substance of built heritage with the help of the first elements used (e.g. Acropolis in Athens).


108 ‘We have always been modern.’

109 In the article Creating Nam June Paik’s TV Garden and Video Fish at Tate Liverpool by Laura Davis, published in the Liverpool Daily Post on the occasion of Paik’s British retrospective, the issue of ‘creation’ of both installations could not be expressed less clearly. Davis, “Creating Nam June Paik’s TV Garden and Video Fish at Tate Liverpool.”
Nothing ever made has been left untouched, nothing ever made remains immutable; yet these facts should not distress but emancipate us … since to appreciate the past is to transform it.\textsuperscript{110}

History is, as we have learned, a way of activating of the past, and any object of inquiry can be read differently using different discursive practices; the only commonality of these possibilities is the very fact of the difference that characterises potential readings over time and space.\textsuperscript{111} According to the art historian Keith Jenkins:

History is intersubjective and ideologically positioned; … Originals do not entail anything ‘genuine;’ that history is, in opposition to it being an art or a science, something else – something \textit{sui generis}, a worldly, wordy language game played for real, and where the metaphors of history as science and history as art, reflect the distribution of power that puts those metaphors into play.\textsuperscript{112}

Without a doubt, in creating its narratives, conservation \textit{actively and creatively} invests in the history of artworks. Yet the productive acknowledgement of a creative power lying at the basis of conservation processes and the acts of decision making that accompany it may increase the emancipation of conservation as a discipline. This emancipation evokes a different attitude from within the field, also in its outside relations. It helps to ultimately free conservation from latching onto new developments in arts and curatorial practice – as a set of practices that, at least at its traditional core and from the perspective of a daily ‘museum business,’ has for long been too preoccupied with the meticulous but somewhat customised capture of the ‘singular condition’ of artworks by countless protocols manufactured in a clockwork-like manner.

Lastly, based on different conceptions of time and the idea of an archive as a place of potential actualisations of multimedia artworks, I propose that Viollet-le-Duc’s idea is not entirely foreign to the new view of conservation proposed in this thesis. That is not to say, however, that by acknowledging creative aspects of conservation linked with Voillet-le-Duc’s sense of restoration as re-creation we ought to free the object from traces of its lived trajectory or recreate it to an idealised condition. Rather, in order to actualise a multimedia artwork from the archive, the Viollet-le-Ducian perspective allows us to approach the archive with a creative attitude and without abandoning our responsibility towards the maintenance of the identity of a work. Creatively presencing the ‘past’ through the expansion of its length to the present and thus abandoning its isolation, conservation shifts the importance from the

\begin{footnotes}
111 For a discussion of diverse interpretations of the past and the creation of different possibilities of historical account see Jenkins, \textit{Re-Thinking History}.
\end{footnotes}
Artefact to its singnification (meaning its embeddedness in discourse and intertextuality); it actualises a multimedia artwork on the basis of the archive, drawing from the multiplicity of its virtual existence in a non-tangible dimension of the archive.

9.5 From the Archive to an Artwork and the Artwork Meaning Archive

The previous sections have suggested that conceiving of an artwork apart from its archive is unthinkable. The artwork is irreversibly bound with its archive; the archive shapes its identity and renders its actualisations dependent on the archival realm. It is, in fact, a dynamic part of the artwork, rather than some distinct and static repository of documents.

This connection is explicated particularly when the archive becomes an artwork in the absence of the latter, or in the case when the historical moment of the artwork has passed. Paik’s deactivated participatory installations such as Random Access, discussed above, and the deactivated TV Cello (collection of the Museum Bochum) are often displayed in the form of an archive – there is additional information on the former activity of an deactivated, displayed artwork such as archival photographs and film. In this case, facing the deactivation of the work, the identity of an artwork is entirely taken over by the archive. The archive stands for the artwork, putting its records and relics on display.

Yet could this relationship be reversed? Can an artwork become an archive? I propose that it can. Untitled (Piano) from the Museum of Modern Art Painting and Sculpture Collection in New York (Fig. 9.1) is an audible closed-circuit multimedia installation created by Paik in 1993. It consists of an upright piano, fifteen television sets, two cameras, two laser disc players, a floppy drive and an electric light. Piano also exists in the Albright Knox Gallery’s collection with a slightly different title – Piano Piece (1993, Fig. 9.2), and has taken shape of Video Piano (1999) at the Guy Pieters Gallery collection in Knokke Belgium (Fig. 9.5). Like their titles, both MoMA’s and Albright Knox Gallery’s ‘Pianos’ are similar in many aspects. In both cases the upright piano is presented with an opened lid lit by an electric light. On top of the piano, one can see traditional cathode ray tube monitors of various forms and dimensions piled up in different positions into a compact block composition transmitting two video inputs. On both sides of the keys, as well as on the floor beneath them, one can see four smaller television sets. Whereas Albright Knox Gallery’s Piano Piece seems to involve

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113 I draw a line between artistic practices that deliberately address or create archives from the artworks that may become archives during the course of their lives due to changing historical and technological conditions.

114 Piano / Piano Piece might be seen as a continuation of Paik’s engagement with modified music instruments inspired by pianos manipulated by Cage already manifest in his prepared piano entitled Klavier Integral dated 1958-63. Piano is a tribute to Cage who died in 1992.

115 The provenance of various titles could have resulted as a variation of the Holly Solomon Gallery’s Untitled (Piano Piece) – Untitled (Piano) at MoMA and Piano Piece at the Albright Knox Gallery. Later in this chapter I have abbreviated Untitled (Piano) to Piano.
a stool, MoMA’s Piano does not. Manifest on the photograph from MoMA’s database, a cascade of black cables falls from the monitors on both sides of the piano to the floor. They connect the televisions with their playback devices – laser disc players placed on the floor symmetrically on the left and right-hand side of the piano. In MoMA’s Piano, the piano plays generic music – show tunes – whereas Albright Knox Gallery’s Piano Piece plays a piece of music composed by Richard Teitlebaum especially for this work. On the monitors, images show Cage accompanied by Paik’s hands playing music on the piano and Cunningham and his images as a child. Another six monitors in the ensemble show two videos, one of which is a live feed of the piano playing by itself (from the floppy disc) transmitted in real time by a video camera, while the other is a real-time video of the playing hammers transmitted from another camera.

I would like to point briefly to the main differences that the artworks’ various images disclose. In one of them we can see Paik sitting in front of his piano with two large U-matic players situated to the left and right of the piano in the background; the spotlights appear to be absent (Fig. 9.4). A little camera directed to the keys of the piano is visible; the cabling is not concealed and thus seems to play an aesthetic role in the installation (Holly Solomon Gallery, New York, Fig. 9.3). On another image the TV compilation resembles the former with the four largest formats placed centrally (MoMA, Fig. 9.1). One spotlight is placed on the right-hand side of the piano, but the stool is missing. On the floor, on the left and right of the piano, one can recognise two different casings of playback equipment – laser disc players. Upon closer examination, the outermost right key of MoMA’s Piano carries Paik’s signature (Fig. 9.1). Another photograph depicts the piano with two tripods for a spotlight (on the right-hand side) and a camera (on the left-hand side), and a white stool situated in front of the keys (Albright–Knox Art Gallery, Fig. 9.2). A camera is fixed on a supporting arm on the right-hand side of the piano. The compilation of TVs is slightly different than the one at MoMA. The playback devices are piled up inside a black cabinet behind the piano, which is different to other examples of the work with the symmetrical placement of these devices on either side of the piano. The cables are concealed; the installation looks orderly.

The various instantiations of Paik’s artworks realise the importance of the playback and display apparatus and show not only different compositional settings, but also a shifting balance between their sculptural presence and the technical function performed. Clearly, this is where the problem lies for conservation. What should be done if the equipment succumbs to wear and tear and technical obsolescence? The obsolescence of U-matic and laser disc players parallels the obsolescence of TV sets and poses the question of whether

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117 The Belgian Video Piano (Guy Pieters Gallery) presents us with yet another view of Paik’s interpretation of his earlier idea, which I cannot address here more extensively for spatial reasons.
the audio-visual apparatus has preponderantly the role of a carrier of an image or sound or whether it is also sculpturally significant. Interestingly, Paik authorised the replacement of the earlier U-matic players with newer laser disc equipment upon MoMA’s acquisition of *Piano* in 1993. Now, the time has come to find a newer technology to replace the laser disc players and the floppy discs from which the piano plays the show tunes. Based on elaborate research, MoMA’s conservation solution for the floppy disk is based on the addition of a new device (IQ Intelligent Player) next to the old one, which would take over the playback function. Therefore the old apparatus would be retained in its documentary value rendering the generational replaceability of the playback equipment superfluous and circumventing the consequences of the removal of the older elements.

Would this also apply to the laser disc players? Their earlier replacement would suggest otherwise. The Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam holds another installation by Paik, *Hommage aan Stanley Brouwn* (1984), in which the playback apparatus – presenting a certain sculptural value – was recently replaced (Figs. 9.6 and 9.7). Despite its radicalism, this solution confirms Paik’s attitude towards the medium. In the words of Hanhardt: ‘For him the medium was fundamental to the experience of the work. At the same time, he’s open to the reality that media has changed, and that his work has to change with it.’ Relevant for my argument, MoMA considers maintaining the appearance of *Piano* with the old decks on either side and favours a future solution presupposing the concealment of the new playback device (DVD or computer hard drive) from the viewer. This solution would pose questions of honesty towards the viewer and render the deactivated apparatus a relic. This again refers to my concept of changeability, which, reflecting the ruling conservation culture may entail a

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118 In contemporary display and conservation discourse, the issue of replacing cathode ray tubes linked with their decreasing market availability and the emergence of new plasma and liquid crystal display technologies has recently become one of the most pressing with no obvious solution. The case of *Piano* was central to the *Collection Care* project initiated by Glenn Whorton at MoMA. In an interview with Jon Huffman, Whorton discussed the replacement of the picture tube. Huffman, interview.

119 Ibid.

120 Ibid.

121 *Hommage aan Stanley Brouwn* (nineteen monitors, two DVD players migrated from the earlier U-matic players, video, steel frame) was exhibited during *The Luminous Image* (14 September – 28 October 1984). In 1992, the museum acquired the work, which was installed to fit a small room. This ‘site-specificity’ had to be abandoned after the room was renovated and the installation no longer fit. With the new presentation in 2010, on the occasion of the exhibition *TV as...* (28 August 2010 – 15 May 2011), the installation was shown in a large room on the ground floor of the Temporary Stedelijk with a new set of monitors and playback equipment. The replacement of the playback equipment with DVD players, which took place on this occasion, just as the replacement of old TV sets with newer technology was, as the curator Bart Rutten puts it, dictated by pragmatism directed towards understanding the equipment from the point of view of its functional values (Rutten, discussion). In this context, it is interesting to note that the section of the exhibition in which *Hommage aan Stanley Brouwn* was presented was entitled ‘TV as sculpture.’ For details related to the creation of the work, see Nam June Paik, interview by the Netherlands Media Art Institute (NIMk), 1984, collection of NIMk, NIMk archive, accessed January 10, 2013, http://catalogue.nimk.nl/site/?page=%2Fsite%2Fart.php%3Fdoc_id%3D9073.

change as a historical practice, in which the relic is deactivated yet retained, for its aesthetic, sculptural value and in terms of a historical instrumentalisation of sorts.\textsuperscript{123} Such a solution is no less problematic that the replacement, which, in the absence of the artist faces the issue of the implementation of a new, state-of-the-art technology. Clearly, for the purposes of a museum, \textit{Piano} also manifests the rationality and plausibility of narrowing down a changeable work to its institutional histories within which, and on the basis of which, it may be further reinterpreted and modified. \textit{Piano} teaches us that the history of installation may be an institutional one – a history based on a singular archive on the basis of which it is written.

So it occurs to me that \textit{Piano} collects traces of the generational shift of technology and mirrors the cultural-economical context of the times in which it is being conserved. This is also reconfirmed with regard to the transition of its data. MoMA transferred the laser disc player video data of \textit{Piano} to archival Digibeta format and uncompressed QuickTime files for exhibition purposes.\textsuperscript{124} In the search for the best and the most initial version of the tape supported by Paik’s estate, the conservation department strives to retrieve the earliest U-matic three-quarter-inch tape. In addition to a Digibeta file that has already surfaced somewhere in the history of the work,\textsuperscript{125} this creates an image of the multitude of data formats and forms of playback apparatuses that the work inherits.

Paik’s \textit{Piano Piece} is not the only example of the accumulation of traces of the artwork’s own trajectory. Duchamp’s \textit{Network of Stoppages} that entails the \textit{Young Man and Girl in Spring} not only discloses the heterogeneity of its temporal strata (see section 7.6), but also becomes an apt instance that illustrates how a traditional painting may, in a sense, ‘archive’ its strata.’ Although it lies beyond the scope of this thesis, this idea could be pushed further and be tested in relation to a range of traditional media, such as cut, framed and reframed, lined and re-lined paintings, repainted canvases and polychrome sculptures, and perhaps even examples of architectural heritage, reconnecting the argument to the heterotemporality of artworks in section 6.1 and 7.6. Furthermore, the many musealised forms of early conceptual art provide us with examples of such ‘accumulative’ artworks.\textsuperscript{126} For instance, in reconstructing the exhibition history of the conceptual work \textit{Glass (one and three)} by Joseph Kosuth (1965), not yet having advanced the concept of the archive, the conservator Sanneke Stigter points

\textsuperscript{123} One aspect remains unresolved, so it seems. If we reconsider Taruskin’s argument regarding the instrumentalisation of a musical performance in this context (see chapter 3), what would it mean, then, to implement a deactivated instrument, for the perception of the ‘authentic’ performance?

\textsuperscript{124} Digibeta is a frequently used abbreviation for Digital Betacam.

\textsuperscript{125} Huffman, interview.

\textsuperscript{126} Often the various executions of LeWitt’s wall drawings from an expanding archive affect their following realisations. Stretched across geographically remote locations, perhaps one could go so far as to conceive of an artwork as an archive in a global sense.
Archival Implications

to its various materialisations dictated by the instructions.127 The new depictions of a sheet of glass leant against the wall challenge conservation not only with the question of the addition to the work and re-performance of the instruction in the absence of the artist, but also with the presence of the former photographs that have already acquired historic value. Rather than being a singularity occurring in space and time ‘accompanied’ by the documentation, the work accumulates itself as an ever-expanding archive. Similarly, yet related to questions of site-specificity in the large project *Drifting Producers* (2004) by Flying City, the art historian Tatja Scholte introduces an expanding artwork that, in my view, adds to its content objects and stories as it moves through geographically distant locations.128

To sum up, in its ability to store the physical variants of diverse equipment and the mental, economical and political attitudes of the parties involved, *Piano* becomes an archive of its own changeability, an evolving container of information with a guarantee of future extension. Artworks, following Heidegger, do not simply disappear into the world but, rather, create their world.129 They may become archival entities where past, present and future interpenetrate. In other words, in the way in which artworks involve pro- and retentions of their various instantiations, they accumulate the past in the present. Interestingly, these characteristics refuse enclosure into a singular trajectory of one variant of an artwork. *Piano’s* and *Piano Piece’s* existence at MoMA’s and Albright-Knox Gallery’s collection introduces another level of the record of the changing characteristics of works. Clearly, artworks became archives of their own changeable selves.

9.6 Archival Turn: Temporal Materiality, Endurance and Continuity

The archive in its physical and virtual sphere, as I have shown, takes on an active role in harbouring and creating the identity and maintaining the continuity of works of art. It ‘contains’ the potentiality for transformation of changeable artworks that have been introduced in the course of this thesis. The singular form of ‘the archive’ that is often used in common language or as it occurs in an illusory picture of archival centrality is contradicted by its scattered and dispersed character, an entity that is – in both its physical and non-physical quality – heterogeneous and in the process of enduring reorganisation and classification. It is this apparent messiness and heterogeneity on a multitude of levels that render the accessibility of the archive – and thus the available information on the artwork – only partial and fragmentary.


Decisions about future embodiments of artworks are being made on the basis of this archive. Reciprocally, the consequent embodiments of works contribute to the archival domain. The archive does not reduce an existent object to a series of its past manifestations; it is not a static domain of records – that of an artworks’ changeability in retrospect – but a dynamic entity directed to the future. New iterations of artworks produced from the archive enter and transform it; thus the formation of the archive is itself recursive. The archive becomes a condition of possibility for the artwork’s change, remaining in a relationship with a slowly, but continuously changing subject – the conservator and a custodian, but also an observer.

The archive is, as I suggested only partially of material, documentary record, harbouring a variety of documentation of the work’s past manifestations – reports, instructions, scores, contracts, correspondence and manuals. It also entails a non-physical dimension of tacit knowledge, memory, skill and, to the same extent, metadata related to its own functionality. The archive-artwork relationship is thus reciprocal on both the non-physical and physical level; the future manifestations of all examples of Paik’s artworks described in this thesis will draw from the archive created in the course of their former materialisations. This relationship may go so far as to create a situation in which the archive may take over the role of an artwork and that an artwork, in certain cases, may become an archive of its self.

The archive holds an answer to the dialectic of the concept and material from the beginning of this thesis: the concept ceases to be something transcendental and beyond the reach of the methods of practice, but is contained in the archive. The archive also holds an answer to the identity of a multimedia artwork. Yet rather than guarding a homogenous continuum of sameness, the archive maintains the identity of multimedia artworks through the persistence of change that follows according to the mereological theory of identity or spatio-temporal continuity of objects, to name but a few. The limits of changeability of these artworks, as well as whatever is specified or prescribed by documents in the archive, just as the applicability of the theories of persistence of identity that pertain to the acceptability of sameness or diversity of a changeable artwork, is equally dependent on judgement. In its judgements, the conservation of multimedia works makes use of Aristotelian phronesis – a rational consideration related to the specificity of a situation that results in palpable effects, rather than a top-down application of rules. This type of rational and practical knowledge, but also analogy with similar cases, becomes applicable where it is impossible to refer to old scenarios and principles, and traditional conservation ethics. In the conservation of multimedia installations, and with possible implications for conservation in general, the conservator’s role is that of maintaining the work’s identity through the interpretation and actualisation of the archive according to the set of rules and values characteristic to the ruling conventions and culture of conservation. In a Foucauldian sense, these conventions and culture sets limits on what can be said or made. The process of interpretation and actualisation, as I have argued, is of a creative nature. The conservation of multimedia installations is, henceforth, no longer
Archival Implications

the return to a past ‘original state,’ or an occupation with the distant past, but rather, in its emancipated form, an active and creative ‘presencing’ of artworks; it is the creation of the archive that will guide future iterations.

Furthermore, because changeability shifts the discourse to the dimension of time and the material of multimedia artworks is, as I argued, temporalised, we may agree that the archive that is temporal and that ‘contains’ time manifest in changeability allows us to conceive of a certain kind of temporal materiality. This leads to the result that the archive may be regarded as a source of the materiality of the media. In other words, the changeability recorded in the archive is a foundation of a medium’s temporal materiality.

The archive from which artworks are actualised has one further consequence. It is no longer the artist that exclusively shapes the identity of an artwork, but rather the archive on the basis of which decisions are made. The archival turn, I suggest, relativises the weight of intentionality of the artist, making space for the creative aspect of actualisation and the involvement of the others (conservators, curators and technicians). So both the artwork and its archive become realms of social investment.

Yet there is still a question that ought to be posed regarding the limitations of the archive. Is there a moment when the archive ceases to be a realm of the artwork’s actualisation and when the work becomes something different? On the simplest level, such a situation could be conceivable in the rare case of a complete detachment from its origins, theoretically feasible somewhere on the cultural and geographical peripheries out of reach of the radiation of the former archive (‘dead objects’ in ethnographic collections). Certainly, the destructibility of the archive or its loss (Derrida) would extinguish the physical sphere of the archive and expunge the information. The virtual archive, however – the tacit knowledge and memory – would still be present as long as the ‘transmitters’ – artists’ former collaborators and assistants – are alive. Forgetfulness would in this case be formative for artworks’ new identity. Of course this implies that the condition for actualisation of a work requires the accessibility of the archive. Whereas in the case of tacit knowledge and memory this relates to the sanctioning of information by those who ‘know,’ physical archives are often controlled posthumously by estates that exercise their power over them. The limitations of the archive may also depend on what is permitted to enter it and what is rejected.130 This refers back to the aspect of accessibility and the constraints imposed by those in charge and the cultural and linguistic limitations.131 There is one further aspect of the limits of the archive related to the question of the permission granted by conservation with regard to its actualisation. Dependent on cultural context and the time in which decisions are made, the physical archive may not hold enough information

130 This can be dictated by political censorship, but also by the artist’s choice (Tino Sehgal’s prohibition of the archive).
131 The limitations of the archive may even depend on the (in)competence to read instructions or technical drawings (in terms of understanding ‘technical language’).
to classify an actualised object as a genuine instance of an artwork. This brings us back to the question of unconservability. In Western conservation culture as a rule, the virtual archive does not suffice to acknowledge a reconstruction as a legitimate instantiation of an artwork (which might not be the case with the reconstruction tradition of Shinto shrines) – this is precisely why exhibition objects and replicas raise discussions. They go beyond the limits of conservability in that the quality (virtual or physical) and quantity of the available archival information fails to justify such a status.

What to do, then, with Paik’s prophecy that ‘in the future, the only artwork that survives will have no gravity at all’? I believe that the solution lies in turning fate into chance and rethinking the value of the physical trace in relation to the open horizons of non-material preservation. In this slow transformation of conservation culture – compared with the fast transformation of media cultures – Paik’s media have already began to instigate changes.

132 For an assessment of aspects related to the permission of the recreation of an artwork, see Kerstin Luber and Barbara Sommermeyer, “Remaking Artworks: Realized Concept Versus Unique Artwork,” in Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks, eds. Tatja Scholte and Glenn Wharton (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2012), 244.

133 Preserving the Immaterial. See section 2.2
CONCLUSION

The Many Archai of Conservation

Today, more than ever, to conserve an artwork signifies first and foremost to understand what it is. Traditional approaches to conservation, presentation, documentation and storage have ceased to serve artworks that are, rather than simple objects, heterogeneous assemblages of things processing and being processed by time. The question that lay at the conception of this thesis pertaining to what the object of conservation is and what we are conserving became one of a more general nature that considered the identity of artworks. Departing from conservation and its particular problems related to multimedia installations, I inevitably had to enter into broader considerations concerning art, culture and, in particular, time. This reconfirms my conviction that conservation knowledge and practice is part of a broader study of material culture that considers the ways in which humans engage with objects in general.

The thesis is divided into three sections that have enabled a progressive degree of analysis and engagement with my argument. In Part I. Concept and Materialisation, it commenced with the investigation into the relationship between the concept and materialisation of multimedia installations at the basic level of their recovery, handling, re-installation and exhibition. Based on the examples of multimedia installations discussed here, I sought the logic that governs the ways of their materialisation and found that it resembled that of early conceptual art. The nearness of Paik’s media art to early conceptual art proved true not only from a chronological perspective, but also in the presence of an instruction, delegated labour, the rendering of the weight ascribed to the technical competence of an artist’s relative and limitation in quality control. I have striven to prove that Paik’s media art was produced collaboratively, moving away from the model of the individual artist-genius working in the isolation of his studio towards the amalgamation of a traditional working space within a well-organised factory. This had implications for the works’ reinstallation and conservation, which just as much became a collaborative effort of a number of conservators, curators and Paik’s former collaborators. The division between the concept and materialisation seemed to already point to the increasingly interpretative, if not yet creative, role of conservation in re-installations of multimedia artworks, prompting the later discussion of the archive. Yet the presence of an instruction from which Paik’s artworks might have been re-executed brought me to the association with the modes of realisation of musical performances. This musical
link was reconfirmed by Paik's musicological bias derived from his studies of music and self-identification as a performing rather than visual artist. To scrutinise Paik's installations, I made use of the theory of the *Open Work* and the dialectic of allographicity and autographicity. I explained how Paik's works might have allographic and autographic qualities, how they can be performed but also are performative, and how they shifted their behaviour from the performance to the object, and back. In the discussion of the applicability of the theory of musical performance I noticed that, in particular cases, Paik's work entails autographic elements that behave similarly to the objects of traditional, visual art and that it is precisely the acknowledgement of such a combination of autographic and allographic qualities that challenges their conservation. By looking at different forms of Paik's instrumentalisations, I began to conceive of media artworks in the broader context of their materiality as a set of temporal and spatial phenomena not reducible to a fixed or predetermined material. This allowed me to gradually move away from the traditional notions of an ‘original’ or ‘initial’ condition, towards the acknowledgment of changeability, somewhat already implied in the open nature of the artworks discussed in this thesis.

Changeability as a phenomenon occurring in time became the central theme of Part II. *Time and Changeability*. Departing from the assumption that changeability is temporal, I strived to scrutinise how the artworks responded to change and related to time. As I have shown, changeability affected the artworks’ conceptual layer just as much as their physicality. In museum displays, they became deactivated and moved from participatory objects to relics; the analogue components became digitised and, last but not least, their changeability involved a further development to new manifestations. Following the assumption that changeability is a manifestation of time, I proceeded to look more closely into the different aspects of time of the object and in conservation. Yet it was not sufficient to look into the one-sided relationship reflected in an object’s alteration. I observed that in multimedia installations time not only processed the media, but the media, in fact, processed time. This dual movement was crucial for the redefinition of conservation as a set of processes that ought to be involved with the understanding of time in the artwork. I looked into the ways in which conservation has sought to understand time and drew the conclusion that its understanding applied not only for the conservation of multimedia installations, but also more broadly. Tenets such as reversibility and retreatability illustrate an inappropriate comprehension of time. My time critique revisited a number of conservation paradigms and its wish to recover an ‘original’ or ‘authentic’ condition or validate one instance of a work over another. I saw the inappropriate conception of time in conservation as related to its misinterpretation for a linear time measurement. This was reinforced by my observation of conservation's deeply-rooted engagement with giving priority to the measurability of space, reflected in its meticulous mapping of spatial relations and the creation of maps and drawings of installations. As an alternative to this, I proposed to adapt the concept of time as duration and continuity, following the Bergsonian philosophy
of time. As I have shown, according to Bergson’s durée, in the conservation of changeable artworks, the present became the survival of the past, while the latter was actualised in the present. Subsequently, this led me to the conclusion that the trajectory of a changeable artwork mirrors the continuum of its change in duration; conservation is a process of the adaptation of an artwork to the present, rather than the illusion of its return to a past on a timeline.

Furthermore, my engagement with time resulted in thinking about the time of the media involved in Paik’s work, such as film, video and television. I discovered that, rather than having a one-sided relationship (time processing the media), the time of the media is intrinsically about manipulating and processing time. I delved into the temporality of these media arguing that conservation, in a sense, missed the moment of their introduction and thus remained unaware of the ways in which their temporality diverged from conventional characteristics. A consequence of the temporal understanding of media was also their placement in a cultural-temporal context, which led me to emphasise their historical condition with relation to their remediated present. Following this new time awareness, rather than ‘arresting time,’ conservation became defined as a temporal intervention in media. So departing from this, I tested whether media may generally be defined by the pace and degree of their changeability in relation to time. I proposed that media processing time, ‘fast media,’ challenge conservation with the pace of their changeability and indeed force us to rethink how traditional media – ‘slow media’ – respond to time.

The acknowledgment of the intrinsic temporality of media with roots in Bergson’s philosophy brought me to the apprehension of multimedia installations as heterotemporal entities that process and respond to time according to the various elements of which they consist. I investigated the heterotemporal character of objects and applied the heterotemporal conception to various levels of an artwork and its relation to the ‘outside.’ I analysed it from the perspective of the multi-element structure of the work, from the angle of the various stages of its trajectory, but also as a relation of the artwork to the time of the museum. I proposed that by means of a conservation narrative based on the Narrative Theory by Paul Ricoeur, conservation might take the role of the adaptation of different temporalities in crucial moments of the artwork’s life, such as its recovery and installation. These narratives would contribute to and draw upon archival knowledge.

In the third part of the thesis III. Archive and Identity, I strived to prove that the answer to the question about the persistence of identity of changeable artworks in time lies in the archive. Here, again, I set off by analysing the way in which the archival realm functions at a basic level during conservation and reinstallations of artworks in a museum, supplementing these views with the picture of the archive from the ethnographic perspective of a researcher. Opposing the ideal centrality of the archive, in my writing the archive occurred dispersed; the information was divided by the departmental structure of a museum, other external bodies and institutions as well as by people contributing their knowledge about the artwork from the
outside. These factors have a major impact on its accessibility, resulting in the fragmentary character of the information and the impossibility of recovering the totality of information. Most importantly, however, the archive became not only a physical repository of documents, photographs, files and leftovers, but also an intangible, non-physical realm of tacit knowledge and memory in an ever-enduring state of organisation and expansion. It is from this entirety of the archival domain that the artworks are actualised. By implementing practical knowledge and making judgements, conservation takes part both actively and creatively in the process of actualisation and interpretation of the archive. The dialectic of virtual and actual allowed me to conceive of the process of the actualisation of artworks as emerging by creation in the present, emancipating conservation and divorcing it from its role to ‘safeguard the past’ and as distant from creative activities. In the productive acknowledgment of the creative aspects of actualisation, conservation maintains the work’s identity on the basis of the archive by actualising archival knowledge and rendering it present to the context of the times in which it operates. Yet in my thesis, the archive-artwork relationship is not only mono-directional. Artworks have been actualised on the basis of the archive, but their current actualisations contribute to archival knowledge and spawn future reinstallations. The archive presented here was never passive, never abgelegt (the consignation of material in a physical space) but an entity from which artworks could be drawn and to which they could contribute, a place of actualisation and activity.

Conservation archives become places of return and reinterpretation based on narratives and equally on the judgemental capacities of those involved. Our understanding of the archive involves guesswork that is always provisional. Selective claims about the present and the image of the past that we build upon an archive occasion the process of the reinstallassment of works and shape their identity through the involvement of new factors – actors and technologies. Conservation based on the proposed notion of an archive modifies its meaning from a practice of managing the physical qualities of works to the realm of discourse and interpretation.

The novelty of my approach is to acknowledge changeability as intrinsic to the identity of multimedia works of art. I strived to prove this in the many examples of installations presented in my thesis, including Canopus, TV Garden, Arche Noah, Zen for Film, Zen for TV, Random Access, Something Pacific and Untitled (Piano), to name but a few. I proposed a new way of thinking about the persistence of change, change that originates and contributes to the archival domain. I suggested that in our post-modern – or post-internet – times, conservation has to take other virtues of the objects into consideration than the purely material and move towards the affirmation of continuity through change. In the words of Lowenthal: ‘Material preservation is thus at bottom an illusion. … What matters in preservation may be continuity
of form, of substance, of texture, of colour..." Indeed, the objects, either recovered, reinstalled or actualised are never the same, and the search for authenticity (as Taruskin taught us in the context of musicology) has to be replaced by the maintenance and defining limits of identity. One further novelty of this thesis is that conservation may only be conceived of as a temporal intervention, an intervention that inevitably adds something new and that regains its creative value, as well as its limits, based on its involvement with the archive. As archons of the archive – a magistracy in the Derridean sense of archival origins – the conservator’s role reaches far beyond the preoccupation with the physicality of artworks and reaches the realm of not only a creating but perhaps also, in a sense, a controlling power.

Analysing the identity of works from such a broad array of perspectives, my project opens up a number of aspects that could be pursued in further research. One of these is the aspect of the spectator’s engagement and his/her role in the open works of the 1960s and 1970s in relation to their changeable character. The impact of artists’ estates on shaping the identity of artworks in the time of the absence of these artists offers an additional field of inquiry. Furthermore, the Fluxus movement of the 1960s and 1970s, with its multitude of artistic production such as objects, paintings, sculptures, events and performances offers a fascinating opportunity for investigation into the status of objects, their production, distribution and manipulation in a broader cultural perspective.

Despite its focus on Paik’s multimedia, the findings of this research – conditioned by the term of specificity of artists and their artworks – may also apply to other (multimedia) installations that are characterised by continuous rematerialisations, changeability, heterogeneity and temporal materiality. I am convinced that this kind of search for the identity of works of art may become intrinsic to any branch of conservation studies concerned with other art forms – performance, internet and web art, conceptual art, land art, to name but a few – and that the archive may offer a point of departure and arrival for a wide range of artworks. Furthermore, I believe that through better understanding of multimedia installations and the aspects of time involved we may also learn how to approach other, traditional art forms. As I have suggested, all media respond to time in a variety of ways and inherit different forms, degrees and paces of changeability. Re:PAIK, meaning regarding Paik, signifies not only addressing issues related to Paik’s oeuvre and the complexities of its maintenance and exhibition, but rethinking conservation’s approach in general and going beyond the debates that still seem to keep us locked in the handcuffs of traditional paradigms and nineteenth century ideals, manifest in the story of Canopus, among others. It is also a means to acknowledge that we, as

135 Taruskin, Text and Act. See section 3.4.
conservation professionals, indeed re-create and re-interpret in order to transfer the meaning of works of art.

Re:PAIK in conservation means regarding the archive with its virtual and material evidence, cultural, social and political baggage ready to be enfolded in the ever-changing context of the times. As much as there can be many arches of the archive, so can the Ark – die Arche – carry its own history of material trace, ephemeral media and the evidence of people reacting to and acting upon it. The Ark / Arche is a vessel of archival knowledge carried to the future and ready to be interpreted. To foster the argument of an artwork as an archive, we may now return to Weibel's insertion in the catalogue Nam June Paik: Werke aus der Sammlung des ZKM from the beginning of this thesis. Following Wiebel, Arche Noah stands for 'the first storage of information, the first hard-drive of human being – kind of the first database ever.' Just as in traditional artworks, the storage of information that Weibel sees in Arche Noah assumes that works may indeed be repositories of events, facts and materials.

When media suffer the obsolescence that is the result of the very progress that gave rise to them, the question of whether the medium is more important that the message is more actual than ever. So our task, based on knowledge derived from the archival domain, is to scrutinise the artworks with which we are engaged, and weigh the system of dependencies between the medium and the message in and through the present cultural context. Our task is also about leaving future interpretations open, not in terms of the questionable notion of reversibility, but in the openness of the archive to future interpretations of the work. The 'reversibility,' or what now can be replaced with the term archival reinterpretation has its reason and foundation in the archive; the archive will henceforth remain a condition of possibility for change of multimedia artworks in another present, or yet different future.

‘… As for the eternity of my work, you don't need to worry at all. … It will last longer than Vermeer or Rembrandt. You simply repair or replace the picture tube when it gets old, which is cheaper than restaurator.' Nam June Paik.

136 Webster's Dictionary explains the meaning of the word 'ark' from Latin arca which signifies 'chest,' 'box,' 'coffer' and arcee meaning 'to keep,' that is designating it as something affording protection, shelter. Webster's Revisited Unabridged Dictionary, s.v. "ark," accessed October 10, 2012, http://machaut.uchicago.edu/?resource=Webster%27s&word=ark&use1913=on&use1828=on.
137 Weibel, "Nam June Paik Arche Noah."
ARCHIVES

Museum and Art Collection Archives:
Archive of the conservation department, Guggenheim Museum, New York
Archive of the conservation department, K21 Düsseldorf
Archive of the conservation department, MoMA, New York
Archive of the conservation department, ZKM, Karlsruhe
Archive of Nam June Paik Art Center, Seoul
    Erik Andersch Collection, Nam June Paik Art Center, Seoul
    Mary Bauermeister Collection, Nam June Paik Art Center, Seoul
Archive of the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, California
Archive of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam
Archive of the Stuart Collection, University of California, San Diego

Private Archives:
Archive of Carl Solway, Cincinnati
Archive of Mark Patsfall, Cincinnati

Library archives:
MoMA Manhattan Research Library, Special Collections, New York
The Getty Institute Research Library Collections, Los Angeles

Online Archives and Databases:
Electronic Art Intermix EAI, New York
Guggenheim Museum, New York
Intermedia Art Institute (imai), Düsseldorf
MoMA Archives, New York
Nam June Paik Art Center, Seoul
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington
Vasulka Archive, Steina and Woody Vasulka
CONVERSATIONS

The 50 conversations listed below were conducted in the form of semi-structured interviews, formal conversations or discussions of an informal nature, and are either recorded or documented in the form of field notes.

Abe, Shuya (engineer, Paik’s former collaborator, Tokyo). Discussion with the author, October 2012.
Althöfer, Heinz (former head of Restaurierungszentrum Düsseldorf). Discussion with the author, May 2011.
Anderson, Simon (Fluxus artist, professor, School of the Art Institute Chicago). Discussion with the author, May 2012.
Arcangel, Cory (artist, New York). Discussion with the author, November 2011.
Brock, Bazon (Fluxus artist, philosopher). Discussion with the author, July 2010.
Buschmann, Renate (director, Intermedia Art Institute IMAI, Düsseldorf). Discussion with the author, September 2010.
Chin, Zeeyoung (conservator, Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art). Discussion with the author, October 2012.
Churner, Leah (Media Art Collection Manager, Electronic Art Intermix EAI New York). Discussion with the author, December 2010.
Clayton, Eleanor (assistant curator Tate Liverpool). Discussion with the author, March 2010.
Downing, Glenn (artist, Paik’s former collaborator). Discussion with the author, February 2013.
Furmanski, Jonathan (assistant conservator, Getty Conservation Center, Los Angeles). Discussion with the author, May 2011.
Garrin, Paul (artist, Paik’s former video fabricator). Discussion with the author, May 2012.
Godfrey, John (former leading engineer of the WNET in New York, Paik’s former collaborator). Discussion with the author, February 2013.
Goetz, Ingvild (Sammlung Goetz, München). Discussion with the author, May 2010.
Grau, Christoph (former art teacher in Hamburg). Discussion with the author, December 2012.
Gregoire, Mathieu (project manager, Stuart Collection, University of California, San Diego). Discussion with the author, May 2011.
Harris, Mark (Professor, School of Art in the College of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning, University of Cincinnati). Discussion with the author, April 2011.

Herzogenrath, Wulf (former director of the Kunsthalle Bremen). Discussion with the author, March 2010.

Heydenreich, Gunnar (Professor, Cologne University of Applied Sciences). Discussion with the author, May 2011.

Hilbig, Larissa (manager of the Harald Falckenberg Collection, Hamburg). Discussion with the author, August 2010.

Himmelsbach, Sabine (artistic director, Edith Russ House for Media Art, Basel). Discussion with the author, September 2010.

Jodi / Dirk Paesmans (artist, Paik's former student in Düsseldorf). Discussion with the author, December 2011.


Kaiser, Philipp (director of Museum Ludwig, Cologne). Discussion with the author, April 2011.

Knowles, Alison (Fluxus artist). Discussion with the author, May 2012.

Krystof, Doris (curator, K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf). Discussion with the author, October 2010.


Lui, CT / Chi Tien Lui (Paik's fabricator and consultant, owner of the CTL Electronics, New York). Discussion with the author, December, 2010 and June 2011.

Müller, Werner (former head of conservation, K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen Düsseldorf). Discussion with the author, October 2010.

Nekes, Werner (artist, Paik's friend and collector, Mülheim a/d Ruhr). Discussion with the author, January 2011.

Park, Manu (managing director, Nam June Paik Art Center, Seoul). Discussion with the author, October 2012.

Park, Sang Ae (archivist, Nam June Paik Art Center, Seoul). Discussion with the author, October 2012.

Patsfall, Mark (artist, Paik's former collaborator and fabricator, Cincinnati). Discussion with the author, December 2010 and April 2011.

Phillips, Glenn (curator, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles). Discussion with the author, May 2011.

Rennert, Susanne (curator). Discussion with the author, August 2010.
Rutten, Bart (curator, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam). Discussion with the author, November 2012.
Saueracker, Jochen (artist, Paik’s former student, fabricator and collaborator, Düsseldorf). Discussion with the author, June and August 2010.
Shirley, Raphael (artist, Paik’s former collaborator, affiliated with CTL Electronics, New York). Discussion with the author, June 2012.
Solway, Carl (gallery owner, Paik’s mentor, Cincinnati). Discussion with the author, December 2010.
Stringari, Carol (Head of Conservation Department, Guggenheim Museum, New York). Discussion with the author, December 2010.
Trowbridge, Cameron (manager Research Services, Getty Conservation Institute, Los Angeles). Discussion with the author, May 2011.
Watari, Etsuko (curator of Watari-Um, Tokyo, daughter of Shikusho Watari, Paik’s mentor and gallery owner, Tokyo). Discussion with the author, October 2012.
Weibel, Peter (chairman of the ZKM, curator, artist). Discussion with the author, June 2010.
Wharton, Glenn (time-based media conservator, MoMA). Discussion with the author, December 2010.
Woodman, Charles (Professor, School of Art in the College of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning, University of Cincinnati). Discussion with the author, December 2010 and April 2011.

AUDIO AND VIDEO RECORDINGS


BOOKS, ARTICLES AND CONFERENCE PAPERS


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---. “The Death of the Author,” Aspen 5/6 (1967).


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---. “Authenticity: Rock of Faith or Quicksand Quagmire.” *The Getty Conservation Institute Newsletter* 14/3 (Fall 1999).


Bibliography


Bibliography


Appendix

Nam June Paik’s Collaborators, Fabricators and Assistants¹

Shuya Abe (born 1932) Japanese electrical engineer and co-inventor of the video-synthesiser. In 1963, he became Paik’s seminal collaborator. The Paik–Abe synthesiser used video feedback, magnetic scan modulation, non-linear mixing, and colourised images from an array of cameras in a TV studio. Built at the WGBH-TV studios in 1969, it was the first machine designed to distort existing video for artistic purposes, following Paik’s vision of video becoming an electronic canvas.

Peter Brötzmann (born 1941) German jazz musician and visual artist. Together with Manfred Montwé and Thomas Schmit, Brötzmann assisted Paik to set up and maintain the exhibition Exposition of Music. Electronic Television in Wuppertal in 1963, which he documented in numerous photographs.²

Glenn Downing (born 1952) American artist active in performance, painting and collage.³ His collaboration with Paik commenced in 1988–1989, and, with the exception of a break from 1996 to 2000, lasted until Paik’s death in 2006. His first commissions were related to the execution of works for Shigeko Kubota. He worked in all of the four Paik’s studios in New York – on Mercer Street, Broom Street, Grand Street and later on Green Street. Downing’s work often involved making frames, metal work and welding. Although he was involved in a number of Paik’s major exhibition projects, his main specialisation was the execution of robots, in which he often used found objects and specific ‘junk’ aesthetics of the 1960s and 70s.

Paul Garrin (born 1957) American video and multimedia artist and political activist based in New York. He became most renowned for his work Man with a Video Camera (Fuck Vetrov, ¹ Paik’s collaborators encountered in course of the research for this thesis.
Appendix

1989) in which he captured a riot in Tompkins Square Park, New York. His works oscillate between populism, social critique and consumerism. In the 1990s, he began founding companies and projects acting to free the Internet from corporate and government control. The collaboration between Paik and Garrin began during the years of Garrin’s study at the Cooper Union School of Arts in New York in 1982. Soon after, he became Paik’s main video collaborator and was responsible for the manufacture of a major part of Paik’s video collages. He also cooperated on various projects with Paik’s wife, Shigeko Kubota.

John Godfrey (born 1942) American engineer and a former supervising engineer of the WNET New York Public Media. The collaboration between Godfrey and Paik emerged during the years of Paik’s activity at WNET where Godfrey held a position of chief engineer of TV LAB (in the pre-Youtube and reality television era, TV labs encouraged directors, choreographers and animators to experiment). Godfrey worked with a number of artists and advised them on ways of producing small video formats for broadcast. The collaboration between Godfrey and Paik resulted, among others, in videos such as the seminal Global Groove (1973) and the electronic collage of New York City entitled Suite 212 (1975). Paik’s idea was to establish a ‘fifty-fifty collaboration’ on the produced tapes, which led to, in the case of Global Groove for instance, Godfrey being acknowledged as a co-author. His role was that of a video editor who worked on the material delivered by Paik, edited to the rhythm of the music (first sequences of Global Groove). The working method was based on ‘in and out’ process, which included copying a sequence to a master tape, taking a new tape, copying another sequence etc., rendering Paik ‘the most original recycler’.

Jon Huffman (born 1932) representative of Paik’s estate, curator and technician. As a former collaborator of Paik, Huffman, at the time of writing this thesis, is the only acting technician of Paik’s estate, and is consulted on re-installations, re-creations, migration and exhibition aspects of Nam June Paik works in the United States.

Shigeko Kubota, (born 1937) is a New-York-based multimedia artist and performer, and Paik’s long-term life partner and wife. She studied at Tokyo University, New York University and the New School for Social Research in the early 1960s and became vice chairman of Fluxus in 1964. She was influenced by Duchamp and Cage, and became well known for her performance Vagina Painting (performed in 1965 during Perpetual Fluxus Festival in New York). She explored the possibilities of image processing equipment at the WNET TV Lab and

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5 For an essay on Nam June Paik’s activity at the TV LAB, see Media Database, “Nam June Paik and the TV LAB – License to Create,” accessed January 21, 2013, http://media.gfem.org/node/9494.
6 Godfrey, discussion.
coordinated the Women’s Video Festival at the Kitchen in 1972. Her collaboration with Paik had the character of an intimate partnership rather than a formal relationship.

**John McGivers**, Paik’s collaborator, active in New York, and mainly concerned with managing Paik’s production.⁷

**Manfred Montwé** (born 1940) studied graphic design and photography at the Werkkunstschule in Wuppertal with Vostell, among others. He was an active participant of Fluxus events and from 1963 to 1967 was a photographer for *Décollage* Magazine published by Vostell. He collaborated with Tomas Schmit and Peter Brötzmann on setting up and maintaining the exhibition *Exposition of Music Electronic Television* in Wuppertal in 1963. Montwé authored one of the most extensive photographic documentations of the exhibition.⁸

**Charlotte Moorman** (1933 – 1991) was an American cellist and performance artist. Apparently responsible for bringing Paik back to music, in 1967, she performed Paik’s *Opera Sextronique*, a semi-nude performance, which resulted in her arrest. Perhaps Paik’s most famous piece with Moorman is *TV Bra for Living Sculpture* (1969), in which Moorman played the cello in the Howard Wise Gallery while wearing a brassiere that Paik had made from two small television sets that covered her breasts. Paik connected the televisions to the cello and a closed caption camera in the gallery space to visualise the sounds Moorman played and captured her audience. In the 1970s, she was diagnosed with breast cancer, yet continued performing until her death in New York in 1991.

**Mark Patsfall** (born 1949) American artist and print maker, Paik’s leading technician and collaborator in Cincinnati from 1986 to 2000, associated with Carl Solway’s gallery. Around 440 works emerged from the collaboration between Paik, Patsfall and Solway. Currently, Patsfall is a director of the Clay Street Press, a print studio, workshop and an exhibition space in downtown Cincinnati specialising in manufacturing a broad range of art prints, portfolios and multiples by artists such as Vito Acconci, William Allen, Richard Bitting, Ronnie Fischer, Richard Hamilton, Shoica Ida, Matt Mullican, Peter Nagy, Nam June Paik, Rm. Palaniappan, Bern Porter, Kay Rosen, Julia Wachtel, Carolee Schneemann, Hannah Wilke and many other Fluxus artists.⁹

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⁷ The information on this collaborator according to Downing. Downing, discussion.

⁸ Neuburger, "Recollection on the *Exposition of Music*," 97-104.

Jochen Saueracker (born 1957) German artist specialised in sculptures, collages and linocuts. Saueracker was studying sculpture as Paik’s student at the Academy of Fine Arts in Düsseldorf with Tony Cragg, Günther Uecker and Nam June Paik. In 1983, he became Paik’s assistant and, later, his main technician in Germany. Saueracker consults numerous museums on re-installations and modifications of Paik’s works.

Tomas Schmit (1943 – 2006) action and conceptual artist, part of the Fluxus movement. Schmit introduced himself to Paik in 1961 and, at the age of eighteen, became his technical assistant and performer. The works in which he participated include Neo-Dada in Music and Kleines Sommerfest at the Gallery Parnas in Wuppertal in 1962. He was involved in Paik’s experiments preceding the Wuppertal exhibition in the garage at Poppelreuter’s in Steinbrecher Weg in Bensberg and together with Manfred Montwé and Peter Brötzmann helped to prepare the Exposition of Music. Electronic Television in Wuppertal in 1963.

Guenther Schmitz, German engineer who, from 1962, played an important role in the early manipulations of the vertical and horizontal deflection that became the basis for later manipulations of the image using the invention of the video synthesiser (Abe).

Carl Solway (born 1935) owner of Carl Solway Gallery (founded in 1962) in Findley Street, Cincinnati. Carl Solway Gallery specialises in modern and contemporary art, including painting, sculpture, graphics and new media incorporating video and electronics. Gallery activities include fabrication of large-scale sculpture; publication of print editions and multiples; organisation and circulation of museum exhibitions worldwide; and corporate collections consultation and installation. Solway was a main representative of Nam June Paik from 1986 to 2000 and ran Paik’s factory with a well-organised system of manufacturing his large scale, multi-monitor installations.

Frank Trowbridge, appears as Paik’s ‘artistic collaborator’ on the poster of the Exposition of Music. Electronic Television together with Zenzen. According to Tomas Schmit and Manfred Montwé, Trowbridge did not take part in setting up the exhibition due to a change to the date of the show, yet remained on the pre-printed poster. He appeared in the Festum Fluxorum Fluxus at the Kunsthakademie Düsseldorf in February 1963.

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12 For Paik’s reflection on his collaboration with Schmitz, see Paik, “De-Composition in the Media Art,” 18.
14 “It was More Than a Nonsense, Of Course,” 120; “Recollection on the Exposition of Music,” 89.
Stephen Vitiello (born 1964) is an American electronic musician and sound artist. He has composed music for independent films, experimental video projects and art installations, collaborating with such artists as Nam June Paik, Tony Oursler and Dara Birnbaum.
Samenvatting


Dit proefschrift stelt daarom vragen met betrekking tot de constitutie van ‘conserveringsobjecten’ in relatie tot ons begrip van wat een kunstwerk is en hoe het functioneert binnen een bepaald historisch moment. Het houdt zich verder bezig met de natuur en het gedrag van multimediakunstwerken en installaties in relatie tot aspecten van hun transformatie. Vertrekkend vanuit conserveringskwesties en kijkend door de lens van de geschiedenis van technieken, studies naar materiële cultuur en mijn professionele achtergrond als conservator-restaurator, stel ik vragen met filosofische en historische implicaties die betrekking hebben op wat – in het geval van multimediakunstwerken en installaties – het kunstwerk is in relatie tot de veranderingen die het ondergaat en hoe dit het concept van ‘tijd’ waarin de verandering plaatsvindt, beïnvloedt. In verband met deze intrinsiek veranderlijke ‘objecten’ is het cruciaal het begrip van ‘tijd’ in conserveringskwesties te heroverwegen en wellicht ook te herzien. Maar dan is het ook cruciaal om het archief te beschouwen als een definitieve bestemming van deze kunstwerken die tevens – niet onbelangrijk – een begin is.

In dit proefschrift ligt de focus op Nam June Paik (1932–2006) multimedia-kunstwerken en installaties als vertegenwoordigers van de ‘proto-new media’. Dankzij de selectie van zijn materiaal en zijn bereidheid nieuwe technieken toe te passen kan hij gezien worden als een van de meest veelzijdige en baanbrekende multimediakunstenaars. Mede door de variëteit en historische specifiekeheid van zijn media beschouw ik Paik als een sleutelfiguur in relatie tot de vragen omtrent presentatie, beheer en conservering van multimedia installaties in het institutionele veld. Mijn fascinatie voor zijn werk komt voort uit de pioniersfunctie die hij vervulde betreffende de implementatie van video, televisie,
Samenvatting

en mondiale communicatiotechnologieën in de beeldende kunst en de gevolgen hiervan voor de transformatie van ons begrip van de materiële uniekheid van een object dat ‘duurt’ [endures]. Een bijkomende motivatie voor de keuze van dit onderwerp is mijn professionele betrokkenheid als museumconservator voor het ZKM in Karlsruhe bij het behoud en de presentatie van één van de grootste collecties van Paiks kunstwerken in Europa.


Door de verschillende belichamingen en gedaantewisselingen van de veranderlijke kunstwerken te traceren, problematiseer ik in deel I Concept and Materiality (Concept en Materialiteit) de ‘identiteit’ van deze kunstwerken in relatie tot de processen van transformatie die zij ondergaan. De innovatie van mijn aanpak ligt in de manier waarop ik vanuit het conserveringsperspectief de materialiteit van deze complexe multimedia installaties in verband breng met conceptuele kwesties. Tijdens het onderzoek naar multimedia installaties uit de jaren ’60 tot en met de jaren ’90, stuitte ik op overeenkomsten met de vroege, conceptuele kunst uit de jaren ’60 en ’70. Hierbij kan gedacht worden aan de nadruk die bij conceptuele kunst gelegd werd op het ‘pure’ idee, de instructies, certificaten en partituren die de werken begeleiden, het uitbesteden van de materiële realisatie en de simultane aanwezigheid van verschillende fysieke gedaantes die het concept na verloop van tijd aanneemt. De notie van het uitbesteden van het werk komt naar voren in het idee van ‘extended collaborations’ dat toepasbaar is op Paiks historisch bepaalde en veranderlijke praktijken. Tijdens de verkenning van Paiks uitgebreide netwerk van fabrikanten en medewerkers, en het latere beheer en behoud van zijn oeuvre herzie ik het concept van het atelier/de studio, onderzoek ik Paiks fabriek in Cincinnati en toets ik de toepasbaarheid van verschillende filmtheorieën op zijn samenwerkingspraktijken.
In hun veranderlijkheid verschijnen multimedia installaties als complexe entiteiten die verschillende houdingen ten opzichte van tijd en ruimte belichamen; zij zijn – in navolging van Umberto Eco’s concept van een ‘open werk’ – werken die in een eindeloos proces van ‘becoming’ continu in ontwikkeling zijn. Hun functioneren is gelijk aan muzikale uitvoeringen. Ook in muziek worden de gangbare noties van authenticiteit [nominal authenticity] die betrekking hebben op traditionele vormen van beeldende kunst, worden afgewezen. Uitgaande van deze muzikale analogie, en refererend aan Richard Taruskins problematisering van authenticiteit in muziek, onderzoek ik de implicaties van de verschillende instrumentaliseringen [instrumentalisation] in relatie tot de authenticiteit van het kunstwerk. In verband hiermee onderzoek ik de relevantie van Randall R. Diperts ‘higher and lower intentionality’ in dit proces. Gebruikmakend van Nelson Goodmans symbooltheorie, onderzoek ik de toepasbaarheid van de notie van allografische [allographic] en autografische [autographic] kunst voor Paiks multimediale werken. In mijn project stel ik een andere aanpak ten opzichte van installaties voor, ik beschouw ze namelijk als allografische werken met autografische momenten.

De associatie met muziek als een temporele vorm van kunst en het concept van ‘indeterminism’ gepropageerd in de New Music vormen in het tweede gedeelte II Time and Changeability (Tijd en Veranderlijkheid) mijn gedachten met betrekking tot veranderlijkheid als een fenomeen dat zich in de tijd voltrekt. Ik adreseer de potentie van een kunstwerk te veranderen (inclusief fundamentele veranderingen) als een historische praktijk. Onafhankelijk van de wenselijkheid van deze veranderlijkheid (wat een subjectief oordeel is), gaat veranderlijkheid verder dan de notie van variabiliteit dat eerder gelijkheid, of slechts variatie binnen een vooropgesteld set van parameters veronderstelt. De extrinsieke en intrinsieke veranderingen in multimedia installaties kunnen resulteren in vormen van veranderlijkheid aangaande de conceptuele laag van het kunstwerk, de gedeactiveerde status in het geval van participatiekunst, aspecten van het site-specific karakter en de manipulatie van de afspeelapparaten en informatiedragers. Bij het bespreken van de verdere ontwikkeling van een kunstwerk stuiten we tenslotte bovendien op de grenzen van veranderlijkheid.

Veranderlijkheid, die vanzelfsprekend verbonden is aan ‘tijd’, verplaatst het argument naar de overweging van het concept van tijd in relatie tot deze objecten en hun veranderlijke condities, en wat voor positie conservering in kan nemen ten opzichte van de fysieke en conceptuele aanpassingen van kunstwerken. De vraag naar conservering neemt hierbinnen een centrale plek in, aangezien conservering zich bezighoudt met de temporele kwaliteiten van kunstwerken. Om een kunstwerk te conserveren moet men zich niet alleen bezighouden met de effecten die het verloop van de tijd op een artefact heeft achtergelaten, maar ook op de conceptuele betekenis van het werk. Het conserveren van een kunstwerk streeft naar het pauzeren van de werking van de tijd op het werk, naar een opzettelijke stillegging van het verouderingsproces en creëert om die reden verschillende

Tijdens het verder onderzoeken van de temporele materialiteit van multimedia installaties heb ik ontdekt dat de tijd niet alleen deze objecten beheerst, maar ook hun archief. Dit brengt mijn argument naar het laatste gedeelte van mijn dissertatie, III Archive and
Identity (Archief en Identiteit). Het archief, bestaande uit materiaal en uit tijd, kan beschouwd worden als een index voor de ontwikkelende attitudes ten opzichte van objecten en subjecten, de contingentie van tijd, discours en cultuur en neemt hiermee een actieve rol in het creëren van de identiteit en het behoud van de continuïteit van kunstwerken in. In zijn fysieke vorm bewaart het archief de documentatie van de verschillende manifestaties uit het verleden, zoals rapporten, instructies, contracten, correspondenties en handleidingen. Ik traceer de verschillende plekken van deze archivale informatie en schets een gedecentraliseerd en verspreid beeld van een archief binnen en buiten het museum. In mijn denken behelst het archief ook een immateriële dimensie van stilzwijgende kennis, herinneringen en vaardigheden. Het archief biedt de oplossing voor het probleem waarmee ik mijn dissertatie begon – de scheiding tussen ‘concept’ en ‘materiaal’ – op, mét behoud van de identiteit van deze kunstwerken. Vanuit verschillende theorieën over de persistentie van identiteit door de tijd heen – ofwel de mereologische [mereological] theorie van identiteit of de spatiotemporele continuïteit van objecten – biedt het archief de mogelijkheid om de identiteit van multimedia installaties te behouden, ondanks de veranderingen die zij ondergaan. Besluiten over de grenzen van veranderlijkheid, of de acceptatie van gelijkheid of diversiteit van een veranderlijk kunstwerk, zijn afhankelijk van oordelen. Steunend op de Aristotelische notie van ‘phronesis’ en de appropriatie hiervan door Hannah Arendt, onderzoek ik hoe – verschillend van de traditionele conserveringsethiek – besluiten met betrekking tot de conservering van specifieke multimedia installaties zich baseren op de specifieke situatie die naast rationale en praktische kennis, ook de kennis verkregen uit de omgang met gelijkende casussen beslaat. Verder beargumenteer ik hoe multimedia installaties geactualiseerd kunnen worden op basis van de fysieke en niet-fysieke dimensies van het archief. In de discussie over de betrokkenheid van het archief in de conservering en door de beperkingen van de realisering gerelateerd aan *mogelijkheden* te verlaten, maak ik gebruik van *potenties* ontleend aan de dialectiek tussen het virtuele en het actuele ontleend aan de filosofische projecten van Bergson en Deleuze. De actualisering, die Bergson gelijkstelt aan de creatie, vindt alleen plaats in het heden, in het archief, en is ogenblikkelijk en eenduidig. Nieuwe iteraties van kunstwerken komen voort uit het archief en betreden ook weer het archief en transformeren het. De formatie van het archief is daarmee dus recursief. Van nu af aan omvat conservering niet langer meer de terugkeer naar een voorbije ‘originele staat’, of een preoccupatie met een verzonken verleden, maar conservering is in de geëmancipeerde vorm eerder een actieve en creatieve ‘presencing’ van kunstwerken; het is de creatie van het archief dat toekomstige iteraties zal begeleiden. Met implicaties die veel verder gaan dan Paiks multimediawerk, is het archief de definitieve bestemming van het kunstwerk. Het is echter ook het begin, een dynamische bron die – afhankelijk van de heersende opvattingen, oordelen en cultuur – de identiteit van de kunstwerken bewaart, voorschrijft en begeleidt.
Résumé

As no other artworks, multimedia installations that have been created since the 1960s and that are comprised of a wide range of components test the ruling conventions in conservation, presentation and museum practices. Through the cycles of their materialisations, performed and performative qualities, on and off status, distributed authorship and with the involvement of display and playback apparatus, various formats of film and video, sculptural and painted elements, organic components and photography they dispute the validity of what has for decennia been understood under the notion of a static, unique or singular ‘conservation object.’

Consequently, the thesis poses questions that consider the constitution of ‘conservation objects’ in relation to our understanding of what the artwork is and how it functions within a certain historical moment. Furthermore, it engages with the aspects of transformation of multimedia artworks and installations with regard to their nature and behaviour. Departing from the issues involved in conservation, and looking through the prism of the history of techniques, material culture studies and my professional background as a conservator, I pose questions with both philosophical and historical ramifications concerning what, in the case of multimedia artworks and installations, the artwork is in relation to the change it experiences and how this might affect our understanding of time in which and as which the change occurs. A crucial role in this discussion is played by the rethinking of time in conservation through its intrinsically changeable ‘objects,’ as well as by the consideration of the archive as a final destination of artworks, but also as their beginning.

The focus of this thesis is on Nam June Paik’s multimedia artworks and installations as representative of proto new media. Paik (1932 – 2006) is one of the most manifold media artists when it comes to his selection of material, constant readiness to test the implementation of new technologies and cross-boundary activities. Due to the variety and historical specificity of the media he uses, Paik can be regarded as a key figure in relation to the questions of the presentation, maintenance and conservation of a wide range of media art installations in the institutional domain. My engagement with his oeuvre owes much to his pioneering role in the introduction of video, television and global communication technologies to the visual arts and their implications for the transformation of the understanding of material uniqueness embedded in an object that endures. A further reason for choosing this topic was
my professional involvement as a museum conservator at the ZKM in Karlsruhe, Germany, in the care and presentation of one of the major collections of Paik’s artworks in Europe.

This thesis is built on three pillars that reflect three stages of my intellectual involvement with time, changeability and identity in Paik’s artworks. Part one is concerned with a basic analysis of what is at stake when observing trajectories of Paik’s two distinct works – Arche Noah (1989) and TV Garden (1974) – using a linear narrative. The second part takes on the aspect of the changeability of artworks under the consideration of the many variants extrinsic and intrinsic to the works; it introduces three encounters with Zen for Film (1962–64), and conducts a critical contestation with the notion of time that underpins conservation and its ‘objects.’ At the highest level of my argument, opened with the philosophical fable of the Ship of Theseus, the third part of the thesis resolves the question of the identity of changeable artworks and is a plea for the necessary engagement of conservation with the archive as the site where this identity is produced. The development of my argument is underpinned by the introduction of further multimedia artworks that supplement and expand upon the main examples.

In Part I Concept and Materiality, by tracing the changeability of artworks, their diverse embodiments and incarnations, I problematise the relation of their identity to the processes of transformation they undergo. The novelty of my approach lies in the way I reconsider the very materiality of complex media installations with reference to their conceptual dimension from the perspective of their conservation. In studying media installations of the 1960–90s, I observe commonalities with early conceptual art in the 1960–70s, to name a few: the importance assigned to the pure idea, the presence of instruction, score and/or a certificate, delegation of the material realisation (fabrication), and the simultaneous existence of a number of physical realisations of a concept in time. The idea of delegated labour is explored in the notion of ‘extended collaborations’ that apply to Paik’s (historically changing) practices. In tracing Paik’s extensive network of fabricators, collaborators and, later, following his death in 2006, the custodians of his legacy, I revisit the concept of the studio, explore Paik’s factory in Cincinnati and test the applicability of film theories to his collaborative practices.

In their changeability, multimedia installations appear as complex entities that embody different stances in relation to space and time; they are – following Umberto Eco’s concept of an open work – works in progress, committed to an everlasting process of becoming. Their behaviour is similar to musical performance as they reject the adaptation of common notions of nominal authenticity applicable to traditional visual arts. Following the musical analogy, and referring to Richard Taruskin’s critique of authenticity in music, I examine the role of the historical instrumentalisation in the understanding of the authentic artwork based on score or instruction and look into the ways Randall R. Dipert’s higher and lower intentionality might play a role in this process. Making use of Nelson Goodman’s theory of symbols, I examine the applicability of the notion of allographic and autographic
art to Paik’s multimedia. In my project, I propose a different approach to installations – as allographic works experiencing autographic moments.

The association with music as a temporal form of art and the concept of indeterminism propagated in New Music has led my thinking towards changeability as a phenomenon occurring in connection with time in **Part II Time and Changeability**. I address changeability as a potentiality of the artwork to change, including a fundamental change as a historical practice. Independently of its desirability, which is subject to judgment, changeability goes beyond the notion of variability that presupposes sameness rather than difference and variation within set parameters. The extrinsic and intrinsic change in multimedia installations may result in variants of changeability related to the conceptual layer of an artwork, deactivated status in the case of participatory works, aspects of site-specificity and manipulations of the display and playback apparatus and formats. Finally, in discussing a work’s further development, I touch upon the limits of changeability.

Changeability, which is necessarily bound with time, transfers my argument to the consideration of how time relates to objects and their changing conditions, and what position conservation might take in the face of physical and conceptual alterations of artworks. In this section, conservation becomes about time; it engages with the temporal materiality of artworks. To conserve an artwork signifies to deal with the effects that time has bequeathed on the material surface of an artefact as well as on its conceptual layer. Conservation may intend to pause the progress of the passage of time and arrest its traces on the artefact’s surface or structure, inducing a deliberate stoppage in its trajectory and thus producing different temporalities; it may also allow for controlled changes in time of sorts, provoking an artificial flow of temporalities. Conservation also involves ways of understanding time. Time seen from the perspective of media installation – fugitive and impermanent materials, reproducibility, multiplicity and changeability – seems to reject the chronological matrix of conventional temporality. I discuss the conventional understanding of time as the method of its measurement and contrast it with time understood in other than sequential and chronological dimensions. Without dismissing the somewhat linear progress of ageing and decay, I have found, among a large body of philosophical concepts related to it, the Bergsonian theory of *duration* – and its continuation in the thinking of Gilles Deleuze – helpful in rethinking the temporalities of artworks in ways other that those of linearity, continuity and permanence that have tended to lie behind the assumptions of conservation. Revisiting the notions of a singular condition of a ‘conservation object’, reversibility, minimal intervention, and the freeze paradigm, I trace back the implicit notion of time that has tended to underpin conservation. The ‘captive moment’ of the registration record, stasis rather than dynamism, becomes the focus of my temporal critique of conservation. Lastly, I take on the Bergsonian idea of the coexistence of various temporalities to analyse the temporality of TV, film, video and multimedia artworks. This also leads me to the acknowledgment of both the
Résumé

heterotemporal nature of multimedia, and of the difference between the time internal to and produced by the object to the time of the outside. The way in which artworks undergo change is expressed in them slower- and faster, and, respectively, passively and actively responding to time. I propose to regard multimedia installations as artworks that actively respond to time, as opposed to artworks that are essentially about decay and ageing, which, like technological ruins, are in accordance with the time of the outside. My concept of the conservation narrative, which leans on Paul Ricoeur's narrative theory, connects the various temporalities involved in multimedia artworks. I extend Ricoeur's phenomenological time to technological time as a fundamental dimension of the human and one of the inner times of the object, where outer time involves physical processes such as ageing and decay that are not produced essentially by human intervention. The role of conservation narratives is to mediate these kinds of time through meaningful emplotment – a storytelling that may become explicated in the narrative of conservation documentation, the artwork's biography or even reside tacitly in the sphere of as yet unarticulated knowledge.

Pushing the idea of the temporal materiality of multimedia installations further, I have discovered that time governs not only objects but also their archive. This moves the argument onto the last part of the thesis: Part III Archive and Identity. Being both of time and of material, as an index of evolving attitudes towards objects and subjects, contingency of time, discourse and culture, the archive takes on an active role in creating the identity and maintaining the continuity of works of art. In its physical form, it harbours a variety of documentation of the work's past manifestations – reports, instructions, scores, contracts, correspondence and manuals. I trace various loci of archival information and sketch a decentralised, dispersed image of an archive both within and beyond museum walls. The archive, in my thinking, also takes on a non-physical dimension of tacit knowledge, memory, skill and metadata related to its own functionality. It solves the problem of the division of the concept and material with which my thesis began, and harbours the artwork's identity. Following different theories of persistence of identity through time, (either the mereological theory of identity or to the spatio-temporal continuity of objects), the archive allows the identity of multimedia installations to persist despite the experienced change. The decisions on the limits of changeability, or the acceptability of sameness or diversity of a changeable artwork are dependent on judgements. Borrowing the Aristotelian notion of phronesis and its appropriation by Hannah Arendt, I explore how, distinct from traditional conservation ethics and in relation to works where it is impossible to apply old scenarios and principles, conservation decisions are based on judgements taking account of the specific situation and implementing not only rational and practical knowledge, but also using analogy with similar cases. Furthermore, I propose that multimedia installations are actualised on the basis of the physical and non-physical dimension of the archive. In a discussion concerning conservation's engagement with the archive, and moving away from the constraints of the realisation related
to the *possibility* rather than *potentiality*, I use the dialectic of the virtual and actual derived from the philosophical projects of Bergson and Deleuze. The actualisation, which Bergson equates with creation, takes place on the basis of the archive only in the present and is only momentary mono-directional. New iterations of artworks produced from the archive in turn enter the archive and transform it; thus the formation of the archive is itself recursive. Conservation is henceforth no longer the return to a past ‘original state,’ or an occupation with the distant past, but rather, in its emancipated form, an active and creative ‘presencing’ of artworks; it is the creation of the archive that will guide future iterations. With implications reaching far beyond Paik’s multimedia, the archive is the final destination of artworks; it is however, also their beginning, a dynamic source that – depending on judgment, ruling conventions and culture – prescribes, sustains and contains an artwork’s identity.