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

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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.

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 comunicatione, Information and Communication,” 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 comunicatione,” 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.


\(^{202}\) 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 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:

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

\textsuperscript{203} Decker-Phillips, Paik Video, 29.
\textsuperscript{204} Wulf Herzogenrath, Nam June Paik: Fluxus, Video (München: Verlag Silke Schreiber, 1983), 10.
\textsuperscript{205} For Bauermeister’s recollections of this time, see Mary Bauermeister, 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 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, Musik des technischen Zeitalters (Zürich: Atlantis, 1956); Decker-Phillips, 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.

\textsuperscript{206} Jon Hendricks (Fluxus artist and curator), in discussion with the author, December 2010.
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 (Parnasus 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


210 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.

ontological form of music.212 He contended: ‘My TV is … a “PHYSICAL MUSIC” … more (?) than the art or less (?) than the art.’213

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.214 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.215 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.216

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

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.\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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).\textsuperscript{222} Accordingly, the shift between something that has been performed to something that is being exhibited

\textsuperscript{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).

\textsuperscript{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.


\textsuperscript{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, \textit{The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas} (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 5.

\textsuperscript{221} J.L. Austin \textit{How to Do Things with Words} (Harvard: President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1962).

\textsuperscript{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 \textit{Philosophical Papers} (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 233-52.
may include the shift from performance to performativity. 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). 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.

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?

‘Is original though still possible? if so, HOW? If not, WHY?’ he pondered. 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.

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


225 So Cage, for instance, declaring 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.

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, *Nam June Paik. Videokunst in Museen*, 64.

227 Lee and Rennert, eds., *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

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228 Laurenson, “Authenticity, Change and Loss.”
230 Dutton follows the idea of two-stage and one-stage works of art described by Goodman in *the Languages of Art* (1976).
231 Dutton, “Authenticity in Art.”
233 For definitions of score and script in relation to video art see Noël de Tilly, “Scripting Artworks.”

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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

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\(^{235}\) 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.

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.’  

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.’ 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. 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. The American musicologist, music historian,
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

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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.’ Laurenson
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

248 Laurenson, “Authenticity, Change, and Loss.”
249 Nelson Goodman, Of Mind and Other Matters (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press,
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 intensions, 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.
Chapter 3

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.’ 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?

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,

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258 Neuburger, “Terrific Exhibit.” The Fluxus artist Simon Anderson contends that Paik’s Zen for Head was one of a series of performances of Young’s score by other artists. Simon Anderson, in discussion with the author, May 2012.

259 In this context, closure may also refer to the limits of conservability addressed in sections 5.7 and 7.2. For closure as a central question in contemporary philosophy see Hilary Lawson, Closure: A Story of Everything (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).
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,

266 SBMA TV Clock comprises: 24 colour 19” Samsung televisions, Model #TC9155M, 24 pedestals. The date has been estimated on the grounds of a request from the museum (1999) directed to Mark Patsfall to provide a description, presumably prior to Paik’s major show in the Guggenheim Museum, New York, in 2000. Archive of the SBMA.
267 From the Notes on Equipment (1999), Archive of the SBMA.
268 From the ‘Notes on Equipment’: ‘These instructions are based on using Samsung model TC9155M, but should work for most standard televisions. The first thing that must be done is to acquire a second yoke for each TV in the clock. That is 12 for a 12-hour clock and 24 for a 24-hour clock. These can be Samsung part DIE-1992GL2429-090-010 Semco or equivalent. If none is available you should try any standard 19” color TV joke, as the purpose of the yoke … so this TV alteration functions properly.’ Archive of the SBMA.
269 Eco, The Open Work, 86.
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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

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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 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.”

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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.”
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(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,

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. As far as the traditional division of roles was concerned, in his writings 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. ‘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. The exhibition brought about Paik’s most significant participatory works of the time, such as Magnet TV, Participation TV, Random Access, Schallplatten-Schaschlik and 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 (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. Although distinct in the sense of authorship, both replicas and exhibition objects pose questions as to the limits of conservability and the ‘unconservable.’

In sum, in Eco’s 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. 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

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283 Ibid.
284 Paik, “About the Exposition of the Music.”
286 The ‘unconservable’ returns in sections 4.2, 5.7, 7.2, 9.6 of this thesis.
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 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

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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.