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Hölling, H.B.

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II. TIME AND CHANGEABILITY

In actuality, nothing is ever at rest, since the vibrational universe moves and changes endlessly.
Bliss Cua Lim¹

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.² 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.³ 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.⁴ Time became an amount of change initially seen as succession.⁵ 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

1 Bliss Cua Lim, *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique* (Duke University Press, 2009), 53.

2 See, for instance: Laurenson, "Authenticity, Change and Loss;" David Lowenthal, "Art and Authenticity;" Reck, "Authenticity in Fine Art to the Present Day;" van Saaze, "Doing Artworks."

3 The possibility of its dependence on space lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

4 J.J.A. Mooij, *Time and Mind: The History of a Philosophical Problem*, trans. Peter Mason (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 24-35.

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.