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

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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.

111 Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1998 (1911)), 4 and 15.

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

112 Views of time other than philosophical should not be left unmentioned. For the biochemist's view of time and change, see F. Cramer, "Durability and Change: A Biochemist's View," in *Durability and Change: The Science, Responsibility, and Cost of Sustaining Cultural Heritage*, eds. W.E.E. Krumbein et al. (London: John Wiley and Sons Ltd, 1994), 19-25.

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).¹¹⁴ 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.¹¹⁵ 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 built 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 Família 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.'¹¹⁶

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.¹¹⁷ 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.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.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

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.

119 An analysis of the aspects of 'historical time' that serves an argument against the restoration's intervention in the creative process is provided by Brandi. Brandi recognises the 'duration' of the creative process, the 'interval' between it and the present and the 'moment' of a work's recognition by the observer. Furthermore, Brandi addresses the issue of historical time in relation to poetry and musical performance. Brandi, *Theory of Restoration*, 61-64; and Francesca Valentini, "Cesare Brandi's Theory of Restoration: Some Principles Discussed in Relation with the Conservation of Contemporary Art," accessed January 25, 2013, <http://www.aboutrestoration.eu/text/cesare%20brandi.pdf>; for adapting Brandian theory in relation to the value attributed to time, see Marina Pugliese, Barbara Ferriani and Antonio Rava, "Time, Originality and Materiality in Contemporary Conservation: The Theory of Restoration by Cesare Brandi, Between Tradition and Innovation," in *15th Triennial Conference New Delhi, 22 – 26 September 2008: ICOM Committee for Conservation: Preprints*, ed. J. Bridgland (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 2008), 484-488; for time and its relation to conservation, see Albert Albano, "Art in Transition," in *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*, eds. Nicholas Stanley Price, M. Kirby Talley Jr. and Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Trust, 1996), 183; for a remark on time in relation to its linear structure see Hiltrud Schintzel, "Info-Virus Art and Restoration: Some Reflections," in Iwona Szmelter, *Innovative Approaches to the Complex Care of Contemporary Art* (London: Archetype Books, 2012) 100-119; for time and preservation of video art, see Hans Ullrich Reck, "Authenticity in Fine Art to the Present Day," in *Wie haltbar ist Videokunst? How Durable is Video Art?*, eds. Christian Scheidermann and Bärbel Otterbeck (Wolfsburg: Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, 1995), 86-90; for time as a cultural context, see Clavir, "Social Context for Conservation;" for time in relation to change of materials, meanings and evolving attitudes, see Jeffrey Levin, "Time and Change;" for a volume on perspectives on time, arts and culture involving issues of conservation, see Judith Schachter and Stephen Brockmann eds., *(Im)permanence: Cultures in/out of Time* (Pittsburgh: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008).

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

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.”

124 Muñoz Viñas, *Contemporary Theory of Conservation*, 17. For an alternative view on ‘original state,’ see Lowenthal “Changing Criteria of Authenticity,” 131.

during which something is restored to an unimpaired condition.¹²⁵ 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.¹²⁶ 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*.’¹²⁷ Carol Stringari posits that installations are often purchased from an exhibition and became ‘frozen’ in a state pointing to a certain historical moment.¹²⁸ 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.¹²⁹

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.¹³⁰ 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.¹³¹ 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

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.

127 Jonathan Ashley-Smith, “The Ethics of Conservation,” in *Care of Collections*, ed. Simon J. Knell (London: Routledge, 2004), 19. The paper first appeared in *The Conservator* 6 (1982): 1-5. My emphasis.

128 Stringari, “Installations and Problems of Preservation,” 273.

129 For ‘freeze strategies’ see Ijsbrand Hummelen, Vivian van Saaze and Matthijs Versteegh, “Towards a symmetrical Approach in Conservation?,” in *ICOM-CC 15th Triennial Conference Preprints, 22 – 26 September 2008*, vol. II, ed. J. Bridgland (New Delhi: Allied Publishers Ltd., 2008), 1041-1047. For ‘freeze frame paradigm’ see van Saaze, “Doing Artworks,” 52; and Renée van de Vall et al., “New Strategies in the Conservation of Contemporary Art,” NWO research proposal, accessed January 20, 2013 <http://www.newstrategiesinconservation.org/>.

130 In literary and philosophical circles, intentionalism was opposed by the anti-intentionalists resulting, among others, from the term coined as ‘intentional fallacy’ and an eponymous publication by Wimsatt and M. Beardsley. Wimsatt Jr. and Monroe C. Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy,” in *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry*, (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954); Steven W. Dykstra, “The Artist’s Intentions and the Intentional Fallacy in Fine Arts Conservation,” *JAIC* 35/5 (1996): 197-218.

131 The Cleaning Controversy was also called ‘Ruhemann-Gombrich debate.’ See *Introduction*; Cesare Brandi, “The Cleaning of Pictures;” Dyskrta, “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 Laokoön 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

132 David Lowenthal ‘Changing Criteria of Authenticity,’ in *Nara Conference on Authenticity in Relation to the World Heritage Convention*, ed. Knut Einar Larsen (Japan: UNESCO, ICCROM and ICOMOS, 1995), 121-135; David Lowenthal, ‘Authenticity: Rock of Faith or Quicksand Quagmire,’ *The Getty Conservation Institute Newsletter* 14/3 (Fall 1999); Muñoz Viñas, *Contemporary Theory of Conservation*; Phillips ‘Kunstobjekt oder Elektroschrott;’ Van Saaze, ‘Doing Artworks.’

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.

137 Susan M. Pearce, *Archaeological Curatorship* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), 106.

being an ‘encapsulation of its history’ up to the moment of its excavation.¹³⁸ 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.’¹³⁹

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.¹⁴⁰ 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.¹⁴¹ ‘World-withdrawal and world-decay can never be undone’ – contends the German philosopher Martin Heidegger.¹⁴² ‘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.’¹⁴³ 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-

138 Ibid.

139 Clavir, *Preserving What is Valued*, 32.

140 For a critique of reversibility, see, for instance, Villers, “Post Minimal Intervention.” For conservation theorems and its application to installation art, see Cornelia Weyer, “Restoration Theory Applied to Installation Art,” *VDR – Beiträge zur Erhaltung von Kunst und Kulturgut 2* (2006).

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.

142 Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Low, 1975), 40.

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 denominating 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.

148 Glanville, “Introduction,” xxi.

149 Jukka Jokilehto, *A History of Architectural Conservation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011) 140-141. See also *Introduction*. Admitting his original sense of restoration, Viollet-le-Duc sets off the modern meaning of ‘restoration’ from the rebuilding tradition in Asia, and the Roman’s practices of replacements. He points to the Latin words *instaurare*, *reficere*, *renovare* that mean precisely to reinstate, rather than restore. His concept is to reinstate a building to a condition of completeness that might never have existed before in any given time. M-F Hearn, *The Architectural Theory of Viollet-le-Duc: Readings and Commentary* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1999), 269-270.

150 Paul Eggert, *Securing the Past: Conservation in Art, Architecture and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 52.

151 For pivotal texts of both Viollet-le-Duc and Ruskin, see the anthology Price, Talley, and Vaccaro *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*; see also Salvador Muñoz Viñas, “Minimal Intervention Revisited,” in *Conservation, Principles and Uncomfortable Truths*, ed. Alison Richmond and Alison Bracker (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2009), 47-48.

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).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 rewind time, as it were. From an etymological point of view, it means 'back to the original place, again,' also with a sense of 'undoing.'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.'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?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

152 Jukka Jokilehto, "Authenticity in Restoration Principles and Practices," *Bulletin of the Association for Preservation Technology*, 17/3 and 4 (1985): 7.

153 'Re-' word forming element; C. 1200; from Old French and also directly from Latin *re-* 'again, back, against.' *Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. "re-," accessed April 24, 2013, http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=re-&searchmode=nl.

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

155 Alessandro Conti refers to the story of the Garden of Eden as a wish 'to return to a primitive state that is better than 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, *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.¹⁵⁶

From different perspectives, moves have been made towards the acknowledgement of the multiplicity of the artwork’s occurrences in time.¹⁵⁷ 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.¹⁵⁸ 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

156 For instance, Muñoz Viñas, following Lowenthal, uses the formulation ‘fabricating heritage.’ Muñoz Viñas, *Contemporary Theory of Conservation*, 112; David Lowenthal, “Fabricating Heritage,” *History and Memory* 10/1 (1998): 5-24.

157 See, for instance Fiske’s idea of iterations. Fiske, “White Walls;” and Jill Sterrett’s idea of planting archaeological ‘find’ as evidence of an artwork’s ongoing life (as opposed to extracting instances). Jill Sterrett, “Contemporary Museums of Contemporary Art,” in *Conservation, Principles and Uncomfortable Truths*, eds. Alison Richmond and Alison Bracker (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2009), 227; and Muñoz Viñas, *Contemporary Theory of Conservation*.

158 Lowenthal “Changing Criteria of Authenticity,” 131-134.

subjects time to space, as it were.¹⁵⁹ 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.¹⁶⁰ 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.¹⁶¹ 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."

161 See, for example, Maïke Grün, "Coordinates and Plans: Geodetic Measurement of Room Installations. Methods and Experience Gained at the Pinakothek der Moderne Munich," in *Inside Installations. Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks*, eds. Tatja and Glenn Wharton (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 185 – 194.

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 alternative 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.

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 Högskola: 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*¹⁶³

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.¹⁶⁴

Bergson's philosophical method is based on intuition, as opposed to the numeric measurement of time based on convention.¹⁶⁵ 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.'¹⁶⁶ 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.¹⁶⁷ Time is multiplicity but not a sum; the heterogeneity of time presumes a temporal, nonidentical plurality and nonnumerical multiplicity.¹⁶⁸ 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.¹⁶⁹

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).

165 Intuition, for Bergson, already presupposes duration. Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, transl. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1991 (1966)), 13.

166 Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 101.

167 Ibid.

168 Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 38–47.

169 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London and New York: Continuum, 2012 (1985)), 80.

the time of clocks ('translation machines') and calendars as instruments for time-discipline.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.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.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 *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,

170 Cua Lim, *Translating Time*, 10.

171 Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, trans. F.L. Pogson (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd. And New York: Macmillan and Co, 1919), 209-219 quoted in Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 48-49.

172 I have in mind his books *Bergsonism* and *Cinema 1* and *2*.

endure as we do.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.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.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).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.'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.'¹⁷⁸ Deleuze maintains:

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.¹⁷⁹

173 Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 48; Bergson *Time and Free Will*, 107. In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson applies duration to the entire universe, maintaining that 'the universe endures.' Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 11.

174 Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 48.

175 I borrowed the verb 'to denature' from Deleuze, who mentions space as a form of exteriority that 'denatures duration.' *Ibid.*, 49.

176 *Ibid.*, 59-60.

177 Duration, according to Deleuze, is essentially memory, consciousness and freedom. *Ibid.*

178 This is also expressed in the illusion of the difference between recollection and perception – the image cannot actualise a recollection without adapting it to the requirements of the present. Deleuze refers to contraction and recollection memory. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 51.

179 *Ibid.*, 58-59.

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

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*.

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.¹⁸³ 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.¹⁸⁴ 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*.¹⁸⁵ 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.¹⁸⁶ In discussing the significance of the past, Lowenthal holds that 'every act of recognition alters what survives.'¹⁸⁷ He adds to it a positive value – the past can be used fruitfully when it is 'domesticated,' 'to inherit is to transform.'¹⁸⁸

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.¹⁸⁹ 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.¹⁹⁰ 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

186 Brandi, *Theory of Restoration*, 48. For coherence, I replaced the originally used 'restoration' with 'conservation.'

187 Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 390.

188 Ibid., 412.

189 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.

190 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.

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.'¹⁹¹ Photography 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

191 Thierry De Duve, "Time Exposure and Snapshot: The Photograph as Paradox," *October* no.5 (1978): 113-125.

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.¹⁹² Artworks are interventions in time; the attempt to return to this intervention is necessarily impossible.¹⁹³ 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.¹⁹⁴

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.'¹⁹⁵

192 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.

193 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.

194 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.

195 Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 412.