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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 8.

### The Material and the Immaterial Archive

#### 8.1 What is an Archive?

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

In current critical writing, artistic practices and museum studies, the archive seems to be omnipresent. There are numerous publications concerned with the theme of the archive pertaining to its definition as both material space where documents are gathered, and a broader context of cultural contextualisation. In common parlance, the archive is associated with a rather large container of paperwork that no longer takes part in bureaucratic circulation.<sup>15</sup> Archives may be seen as active nexuses of a variety of documents involving traces, objects, images and inscriptions through which we are able to recall and revisit individual and shared memories and histories.<sup>16</sup> Archival documents become many things; objects may also be treated as documents associated with a particular past or present that just have been. Yet not everything is an archive; as opposed to the uniqueness of archival documents, for instance, a library is not equivalent to an archive by the virtue of it being constituted of reproducible, published resources.

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15 Sven Spieker, *The Big Archive: Art From Bureaucracy* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2008), ix.

16 Merewether, ed., *The Archive*.

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

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

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

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17 Eric Kluitenberg, "Towards a Radical Archive," *De Balie's Eric Kluitenberg*, Institute of Network Cultures Weblog, accessed September 14, 2010. <http://networkcultures.org/wpmu/weblog/2010/09/09/towards-a-radical-archive-de-balies-eric-kluitenberg/>.

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

19 Spieker, *The Big Archive*, Xii, 1.

20 Jacques Derrida, *Archival Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 9-10

21 Derrida, *Archival Fever*, 12.

22 Foucault, *The Order of Things*.

23 'The archive always has two bodies: it is as much an institution as a conception, meaning a working place and method.' Knut Ebeling and Stephan Günzel, *Archivologie: Theorien des Archives in Wissenschaft, Medien und Künsten* (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2009), 10.

is also, at least since Foucault's (quasi) transcendental conception of the archive, increasingly confusing – the archive may both be a theory and a concrete physical space of storage. The role of an archive as a research practice has recently become manifested in termini such as 'archivology' and 'archival sciences'.<sup>24</sup> According to social-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, the archive is a site of memory, which places it between the physicality of the stored material – the archival body – and a spirit that animates it, 'the pastness itself'.<sup>25</sup> Yet if the archive was synonymous with memory, would there be a need for its physical space? In his anthropological view Appadurai conceives of an archive as a social and 'deliberate' project, a work of imagination.<sup>26</sup> If the archive is our cultural memory, the exclusion from the archive has necessarily to do with forgetting.<sup>27</sup> So archiving has to do with exclusion and forgetting as much as with memory, following what has been put forward by the German philosopher and cultural critic Friedrich Nietzsche – that we have to forget in order to imagine.<sup>28</sup> The archive's destructibility would be the equivalent of forgetting in the physical realm and links us again to the archive as a physical space.<sup>29</sup> On all levels of its conceptualisation as both a theory and a physical space, rather than being passive, the archive is – what should not be lost sight of – a dynamic space of exchange and actualisation; in the words of Foucault the archive regulates and generates statements.<sup>30</sup> As such, it is also once more distinct from a library – the archive lacks disconnection with the active production of knowledge.<sup>31</sup>

## 8.2 The Museum Archive and its Documentary Dimension

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

24 In German 'Archivology' and 'Archivwissenschaften.' Ebeling and Güntzel, *Archivologies*. Archival sciences are being taught in graduate programs, for example at the Universities in Bern and Potsdam.

25 Arjun Appadurai, "Archive and Aspiration," in *Information is Alive. Art and Theory on Archiving and Retrieving Data*, eds. Joke Brouwer and Arjen Mulder (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers; V2\_Publishers, 2003).

26 Ibid., 24.

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

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

29 Derrida, *Archival Fever*, 12.

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

31 Ebeling and Güntzel go so far as to posit that the archive rather than the library became the locus of knowledge. Ebeling and Güntzel, *Archivologies*, 12. For an overview of archival conceptions and their relation to the creation, curation and consumption of the archive, see Sue Breakell, "Perspectives: Negotiating the Archive," *Tate's Online Research Journal* (Spring 2008), accessed January 5, 2012, <http://www.tate.org.uk/download/file/fid/7288>.

functionalities of archives in museums. In conservation and museum practice, rather than there being a largely bureaucratic instrument in the hands of the authorities, the archive is a facticity and an everyday tool, a locus where the empirical proof of the daily rituals, routines and conceptual mechanisms underpinning it lie within reach.

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

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

The particular role of museum in relation to the archive may also be the reason why the archiving is closely associated with musealisation (or: 'museumification'). The musealisation of artworks takes place precisely on the disjunction of their previous vital function, the 'immediacy of life,' and their afterlife as museum objects.<sup>32</sup> In the essay *Valéry Proust Museum* (1967), Adorno discusses the association between a museum and mausoleum, ascribing it more than phonetic analogy.<sup>33</sup> This somewhat echoes Heidegger's contention that '... Placing [artworks] in a collection has withdrawn them from their own world' and Hegel's remark that '... Art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the

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32 Adorno, "Valéry Proust Museum," 175-185. See also section 1.1.

33 'The German word *museal* has unpleasant overtones. It describes objects to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying. ... Museum and mausoleum are connected by more than phonetic association. Museums are like the family sepulchres of works of art.' Adorno, "Valéry Proust Museum," 175. Similarly, discussing durability and change in heritage from a biochemist's view, F. Cramer posits that a museums 'takes on a character of a mausoleum' in that it can only present objects taken out of their context. Cramer, "Durability and Change," 23.

past.<sup>34</sup> In his essay, juxtaposing Valéry's and Proust's view on art – which emphasises the autonomy of the artwork by the former and gives primacy to the experience and memory by the latter – Adorno provides us with a dialectic leading to the thesis that works must be sent to 'death' in order to live.<sup>35</sup> Paraphrasing Adornian death and re-birth of objects, and divorcing the archive from its exclusive 'pastness,' at this stage of my argument, it shall suffice to conceive of a museum archive as a locus of works' de- and re-activation based on the active involvement of conservation and curation.

### 8.3 Archival Dispersion: Inside and Outside the Museum

The institutional material archive is constituted by a network of micro archives of the museum's various departments and specialities (Fig. 8.1). Directorial, curatorial, conservation, registration and technical archives, to name but a few, underlie all daily activities, gathering an ever-expanding quantity of information and knowledge about the artwork and its performance in the environment. Addressing the dispersion of the archival record, there are three more points worth mentioning. First, many established institutions, such as the MoMA in New York, maintain an archive that functions to document the history of the museum.<sup>36</sup> Second, and often lacking a prescribed form and written policy, a micro archive (in the literary sense compared with the vast amount of archival information available in its entirety) is accessible for external research from which the files determined 'for internal use only' have been extracted. I will return to this aspect in section 8.4. Third, the archives within a research library (e.g. MoMA, Stedelijk Museum) or sometimes 'archives within an archive' at the museum (e.g. Nam June Paik Art Center) including artists' correspondence, memorabilia or even multiples, contribute to the rhizomatic complexity of the archive.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, as a locus of the many heterogeneous repositories, the museum in itself, I suggest, might be seen as an archive. It can thus be said that at the level of the museum – and specific to its institutional culture, collection policies and dimensions – both the museum as an archive and

34 Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 39; Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T.M. Knox, Vol.1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 11. In his analysis of experience in the book *Art as Experience*, John Dewey signals the negative effect that the separation of museum objects from the experience of everyday life may have to their perception. Tom Leddy, "Dewey's Aesthetics," *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, ed. N. Zalta (Fall 2012), accessed January 1, 2013, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dewey-aesthetics/>.

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

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

37 Rhizomatic pertains to *rhizome* – a term coined by Deleuze and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari that refers to research allowing for a non-hierarchical entry and exit points in the interpretation and representation of data. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004 (1987)).

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

Owing to the fact that conservators stand out in museums for their professional dedication to the documentation of artworks, the conservation department creates its own specific archive, which, in the case of large conservation departments may even be split into sub-departmental archives.<sup>38</sup> This renders the conservation profession unusual in zeal to document, especially in comparison to the other museum professionals who do not – or cannot – invest time in the documentation of the knowledge of the artwork.

In the day-to-day practice of an institution, various micro archives established by collecting relevant documents, objects and traces in the registers of various departments are being constructed simultaneously. This is not to say that in the traditional sense each department maintains a separate record of a work in a specially-designed file as the idealised view of an archival register would suggest, but rather that each holds a record of specific aspects related to the work. In other words, the separated repositories of object-related documentations create a certain dispersion of the archive in a museum.<sup>39</sup>

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

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

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38 For the matter of documentation, codes of ethics and standards of practice that dictate this development, see "ICOM Code of Ethics," accessed January 8, 2013, <http://icom.museum/the-vision/code-of-ethics/>; "AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice," accessed March 26, 2013, [http://www.nps.gov/training/tel/Guides/HPS1022\\_AIC\\_Code\\_of\\_Ethics.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/training/tel/Guides/HPS1022_AIC_Code_of_Ethics.pdf).

39 It might be argued that a repository is not eponymous with an archive, since, to a degree, the archival information in it is being ordered and systematised. Although it might be true in some cases, it is merely a subjective judgement, whose order or system renders a pile of unordered documents an archive. The meaning of the archive lies not in a single document but in a group of documents that are connected to one another in a system of interrelations. Spieker, *The Big Archive*, 18. These relationships render an administrative registry 'an organism in itself, with its own vital principle.' Friedrich Meinecke, *Erlebtes, 1982–1901* (Leipzig: Koehler and Amelang, 1941), 142–143 quoted in Spieker, *The Big Archive*, 20. Such a material archive is a matter of interpretation, and it becomes what it is mostly appreciated for – a valuable research resource – in an act of an a posteriori evaluation by someone who instigates it from the outside, who by his/her ability to judge and make decisions activates it to what it is to become, as it were.

and collection maintenance reports. Conservation reports involve a great deal of an artwork's data related to its physical constitution but frequently also its iconographical analysis and provenance material. Occasionally the documentation of a material analysis (made internally or externally) offers an opportunity to gain a glimpse into the microscopic build-up of a work and its methods. Conservation files regarding a recovered artwork may also include relevant literature and/or its reference and technical information sheets regarding materials used for conservation or implemented in the artwork. The conservation file involves diverse documents related to the cooperation with an artist – artist interviews in written form or in the form of audio and videotapes, diverse files documenting collaboration between artists, their technician or representative and conservation department, and emails of various sorts regarding the work and its installation and meetings minutes. It also involves the documentation of works loaned to other collections or exhibition venues and works borrowed from other museums. Often, the insurance requirements presuppose the production of a condition report on each 'movement' of the artwork outside and inside a museum. Especially in the case of ZKM's extended exhibition practices, its conservation archive contains a vast number of condition reports and photographic records on various stages of works from its own and other collections. The management and surveillance of external commissions for conservation measures that result in written and photographic documentation are also part of a conservation archive. In ZKM, the conservation archive serves as a locus of leftovers from an artwork's instalments, spare parts, restitution materials, and instructions for assemblage of pieces fabricated in the course of the work's maintenance or by the artist himself. With regard to contemporary art and art created in situ – site-specific, situation-specific installations, it is not seldom that the conservation department advises the artist on the implementation of materials and thus manages the record and leftovers from diverse trials and tests. Occasionally, elements of works that are not built into the exhibited piece are retained in the conservation lab and often become a part of the material archive of a work. Needless to say, they are highly relevant in relation to material analysis, which may then be conducted on such an element without intervening in the actual work. There is no straightforward answer to question of the accessibility of a conservation archive. Due to the complexity of the stored material and the physical evidence, this archive may be partially accessible in its systematised form of registration files. Sometimes, partial, 'processed' information may be transferred to a registration archive and become accessible; at other times, only those with special enquiries are permitted to view the conservation archive.

The department of exhibitions provides a vast amount of contextual information regarding the identity of a work. It might maintain a record of an artwork's past displays and bibliography, particularly in the case when a work is being loaned from a gallery or the artist for a temporary display and is subsequently acquired. Although it is often the case that the registration department maintains the entire record of an artwork's acquisition, the exhibition

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

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

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

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40 For instance, the archive of Harald Szeemann acquired in 2011 by The Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles and, at the moment of writing of this thesis, reviewed and classified in order to make it accessible for research.

such as a documentary photograph and the context and purpose for which it was taken is often underappreciated. The photographic documentation originating, for instance, from exhibition, registration, art handling or conservation contexts, may deliver a vast amount of contextual information specific for the purpose for which it was made and later accumulated. To illustrate this, it might be sufficient to mention the specificity of detailed conservation photographs registering the slightest damage on an object's surface in comparison with the meticulously documented wrapping, securing and crating of the work by an art handling or registration department. The photographic, specific registry of the art handling department is a source of site-related information not only for the condition of a work being unpacked or crated, but also for its location in the exhibition architecture or the handling practices of the institution.

Accordingly, the department of building services may also produce a number of interesting records that are related to the institutional life of an artwork. For instance, the ZKM holds a record linked with the security of the exhibition space. This might be highly relevant to understand how the spatial setting of large-dimensional multimedia installations is affected by factors of security, building maintenance and issues related to, for instance, the illumination of a gallery. Last but not least, archival records of climate control of the museum may also be held at the department of building services.

Institutions that collect media artworks and installations such as the ZKM have established departments in which the technical maintenance of playback and display apparatus takes place. The records of the technical department may be rendered in the conservation archive, but a substantial number of traces, leftovers and technical data is maintained in the registry of the technical department. Ideally, much of the written information is ordered and structured in a digital database shared between the various departments. Furthermore, the digitisation as a common practice in a number of media collections (and often mistaken with their conservation) produces a portion of data that is either rendered locally or becomes part of a databank. Because media art conservation is a young and emerging field, and, in the majority of established institutions the positions of media conservators are nascent, the respective form of an archive still has to be developed. Often the archives of conservation and technical departments are being increasingly fused (not to say confused) in the daily practice of a museum. Last but not least, the audio-visual department may hold the artwork's video and film carriers including its back-up and/or digitised copies.

The list of such micro archives may be long, depending on the structure and dimension of the institution. Certainly, there are other departments that may offer an interesting insight into the image of an artwork's life in a museum, including the education department, the public relations department, the office of event management, the archives of diverse research institutes and last but not least, the museum library or in the case of media-oriented institutions – the so-called 'mediathek' at the ZKM. In smaller institutions,

the archives may be minimised into the form of a personal archive gathered accordingly to the employee's professional orientation and interests. In looking into diverse archives in a museum one may observe a mechanism that allows one microstructure to permeate another. So, the technical department archive might become part of a conservation archive (ZKM) and the conservation archive part of a registration archive and so forth. It could be said that this interrelation between the micro archive and the institutional archive is similar to the relation between the institutional archive and the larger, cultural archive to which it contributes.<sup>41</sup>

One more point worthy of mentioning is that whereas it could be said that the 'messiness' of the archival structures in relation to a nascent discipline of (new) media conservation and display is somewhat legitimised, a plausible explanation of the blurred boundaries between the departmental archives in various museums appears to be lacking. This is, I believe, due to the drive to classify and organise knowledge on the one hand, and, on the other, the impossibility of the clear classification of archival records in conjunction with the temporal, cultural, economic and political factors that condition it.<sup>42</sup>

If we reconsider the case of *Arche Noah* in this light, it can be said that research into the artwork's institutional history was based on internal knowledge of how the micro archives of diverse departments function and what kind of information can be gathered by approaching them. This was facilitated by my professional employment at the museum and the practical involvement in the recovery of the artwork. During the research, *Arche Noah* appeared in many places and forms. The conservation department had a substantial number of photographs and reports regarding the condition in which the artwork was recovered, illustrating an interesting collage of elements that were assembled together largely based on catalogue records and the knowledge of persons acquainted with the work ever since its acquisition. The art handling process, part of the technical department of the ZKM, recorded a large amount of information in the form of photographs and art-handling sheets involving details about the wrapping, crating and securing of the work for its transportation and storage. The registration department housed a number of data about the relocation and lists of works. The technical department created a list of *Arche Noah*'s playback and display equipment, which was stored at an entirely different location, in the museum's technical storage. Interestingly, here, as is often the case with media installations in large institutions that collect them, the equipment was not reserved exclusively for Paik's work. Rather, it was used interchangeably with other installations, for example in the re-installations of Marie-Jo Lafontaine's or Fabrizio Plessi's

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41 A cultural archive may be understood as a material and conceptual entity enhancing the entire complexity of cultural production.

42 For the implications of classification as a natural, human compulsion, see Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and its Consequences* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2000), 1-32 and 319-326.

works. At the beginning of my research for this thesis, the artwork commenced to gradually be identified by picking up all fragments of information from these various places. Although barely documented in the 1990s, the image of *Arche Noah* began to crystallise through diverse references and approached departments. Seemingly, in these multiple places that carried traces of *Arche Noah*, the artwork was physically inexistent as something identifiable as *Arche Noah*, but rather as a conglomeration of elements, disassembled planks, animals and technical equipment in the storage, documents in many archival registries and oral accounts and memories – something truly scattered, diffused and fragmentary. It can be said that *Arche Noah's* materialisation as an installation required an active–creative involvement between the conservators and, later, during the test re-installation, between conservators, a curator supported by the technicians and Paik's assistant. This involvement included archival knowledge used in an interpretative-creative manner in the activation of archival documents as well as tacit knowledge, to which I will turn shortly.

To sum up, the archive described here contradicts the ideal of a centralised, singular locus of documents and materials that may be easily consulted.<sup>43</sup> The archive is, as has been shown at the many micro levels of a museum, dispersed by the nature of a heterogeneous system of institutional departments and their responsibilities, affecting the way in which an artwork's identity is constructed.<sup>44</sup> In the search for the answer to what the artwork is in the institutional domain of a museum, such an archive instigates the more flexible and multi-locational effort of recovering its different fragments.

This dispersion – or decentralisation – is also reflected in a bigger picture of, say, external space. Because works are being registered not only in their own collection, but also in lending institutions on the occasion of various temporary exhibitions and displays, material traces and various kinds of information may be found externally.<sup>45</sup> When tracing an archive of an artwork, or, in other words, pursuing the research of a particular artwork, one often has to investigate the archives of the author, including his gallery(-s), collaborators, estate, family and friends (Fig. 8.2). The archival research conducted on *Arche Noah* necessitated consulting various actors that were involved in its trajectory, such as Paik's assistant Saueracker, and ZKM's technicians and curators. The archival research for *TV Garden* was more complex – not only was it located in the archives of three different institutions, but all of those locations

43 Compare with the view of artists' archives in Ijsbrand Hummelen, and Tatja Scholte, "Sharing Knowledge for the Conservation of Contemporary Art: Changing Roles in a Museum Without Walls?," in *Modern Art, New Museums. Contribution to the 2004 IIC Congress, Bilbao*, eds. Ashok Roy and Perry Smith (International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, 2004), 208-212.

44 Indeed, such a decentralisation affects not only the information gathered during the course of external research, but just as much the research done by domestic personnel, who simply may not find the data within the institution itself.

45 In the absence of a centralised archival institute problematised in relation to land art, see Vivian van Saaze, "The Ethics and Politics of Documentation: On Continuity and Change in the Work of Robert Smithson," in *Robert Smithson: Art in Continual Movement*, eds. Ingrid Commandeur and Trudy van Riemsdijk-Zandee (Amsterdam: Alauda Publications, 2012), 70.

were bound with different actors involved in its re-installations – Paik’s curators Hanhard in the United States, Herzogenrath in Germany, Young Cheol Lee in Korea, Paik’s various technicians and assistants, and galleries and the galleries’ owners involved. The archive appears to be distributed across different continents; its scattered and fragmented nature is particularly apparent. That is to say that it remains in the sphere of impossibility to trace down all the documents of a work that has experienced a rich history of displays and acquisitions. Accordingly, by no means may the investigation of a singular archive of a work become exhaustive; rather, it may provide information on a fragment of its trajectory. This also implies that the reconstruction of an artwork’s trajectory either related solely to its museum’s life or extended to the artistic archive documenting its origins will of necessity always be incomplete and fragmentary. As Foucault put it, the archive is available only in fragments, regions and levels, and not in its totality.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, an individual who accesses an archive faces not only a vast number of documents but also a lack of documentation. These gaps in archival records may provide valuable information based precisely on what lies beyond the retrievable. A work’s identity is created on the basis of what the archive offers, together with the rupture in its record, its belatedness and heterogeneity. The construction of the identity of a multimedia artwork such as *TV Garden* is always dependent on the information that is retrievable and accessible – the access to archives being subject to control. It is formed on the basis of the archive filtered through the present cultural context. The interesting question here remains: What do the archives make possible and what do they repress? Is all materiality of an artwork archiveable?

## 8.4 The System of Accessibility

In my account of diverse micro archives and their role in forming the identity of an artwork in a collection, the issue of their accessibility has already been mentioned. It goes without saying that access to museum archives is highly controlled.<sup>47</sup> First, there is an amount of information that is not meant to percolate outside of the structures of an institution for various political, economical and strategic reasons. Second, the accessibility of the archive is hindered by the

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46 “The archive cannot be described in its totality. It emerges in fragments, regions and levels, more fully, no doubt, and with greater sharpness, the greater the time that separates it from us. Michael Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 130.

47 During my research for this thesis, the Paik archives donated by Paik’s estate to the Smithsonian Institute in Washington were not accessible due to the classification they had to undergo. Furthermore, a number of museums guard the content of their archives in order to enable research and publications for their own staff. For access to (preservation) data, see, for instance; Gunnar Heydenreich, “Documentation of Change – Change of Documentation,” in *Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks*, ed. Tatja Scholte and Glenn Wharton (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2012), 155-171.

very fragmented, scattered structures of a museum archive.<sup>48</sup> Lastly, in some museums, the curatorial archive is not accessible to conservators and vice versa. If it does exist, the collection management database often has limited, protected access for different departments.

Let us now examine an extreme example related to the sanctioning of archival content. Rather than with factual data regarding Paik's installations in their collection, the field research at the Nam June Paik Art Center (October 2012), provided an invaluable insight into the functionalities of the archive. Although, as I suggested, restrictions to accessibility are not entirely unfamiliar to Western museum culture, it was nevertheless surprising that none of the documents accessible for research in a number of museums I approached were available in Seoul.<sup>49</sup> The archivist in charge legitimised this restriction with a law limiting the access to museum files for research purposes for a time period of ten to fifteen years. This rendered the viewing of documentation or registration files impossible.<sup>50</sup> How can research be done under these conditions? To address this issue, I made decision to implement the method of observation and empirical study of the works installed in situ. In an attempt to understand the characteristics of *TV Garden*, for instance, I conducted a number of discussions with the staff that provided a wide range of possibilities for interpretation. These discussions, – as it gradually became clear – delivered another form of data, a part of a non-material archive that will be addressed in the following. One further reflection on the accessibility of archives in conjunction with the research I conducted in Korea and, subsequently, in Japan, was that, even if accessible, the cultural and language barriers would determine their accessibility.

Another aspect of the accessibility of archives refers to the system of storage of the data. In the museum archive the system in which the traces of artworks and documents are stored may become more relevant than their content. One can speak about the topology of the archive, to which the key lies with the authority of an archivist. In the case of the material conservation archive, the conservator takes on the role of a controlling and maintaining power over the topology and content of the archive. The archive is non-homogenous not only in the sense of how it is physically created but in the way it is served by different technologies implemented to accumulate and maintain it.<sup>51</sup> The technology not only changes the process of

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48 For a discussion on the accessibility of the museum archive, see Luis Marie Fink, "Museum Archives as Resources for Scholarly Research and Institutional Identity," in *New Museum: Theory and Practice; An Introduction*, ed. Janet Marstine (Malden, Oxford, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 292-307.

49 In Europe and the US, depending on the museum's policy, it is often the case that condition reports, information about the artworks regarding their acquisitions, insurance and other data regarded as confidential are not shared.

50 According to the policy "Public Records Management Act" Korean public institutions' files are protected from any external access that could compromise them. Sang Ae Park, email message to the author, November 5, 2012.

51 The archive reflects the technical and technological status of times in which it is being accumulated. Yet against the promise they bore, the computerisation and digitisation of records failed to contribute to the external accessibility of the archive; only seldom is an external researcher allowed to browse the databank of a museum.

archiving but also of the archived content itself.<sup>52</sup> To be 'served' by the archive, as I suggested, one needs to acquire knowledge of its structure and functionality. Only seldom can this be achieved by an individual who deals with the archive on something other than a daily basis and from a position other than the inside of a museum. This is illustrated by two different types of information used for the accounts of *Arche Noah* and *TV Garden*. Whereas the former was based on the firsthand experience of the archive from the position of the insider, the latter could only be reconstructed from the information that was made available to me as an external researcher. This is also due to the fact that a large part of the archive is of a different nature than physical or material. This system of the archive, the metadata, as it were, of archival knowledge far beyond the physical system of order in the registry constitutes another – and other than physical – sphere of the archive, which I will discuss shortly. In creating the work's identity through retrieved records, the accessibility of information plays a very relevant role. If a reconstruction of a work based on archival documents and a museum's repository is incomplete due to the conditions of accessibility, it will result in subsequent records that may shape the work's future manifestations. In my account of *Arche Noah*, the work's earlier realisation, with and without the plants, and with or without banners, instigated an even greater changeability and further modifications that followed such as *Arche Noah's* EnBW version without animals and with plants. It can be maintained, that the accessibility of archival data in multimedia installations shapes the way in which their identity is being constructed, and which, in turn, as we have seen in the example of Paik's works, enters the archival domain as a possibility for their future materialisations.

To resume, the museum archive and the museum as an archive is an ever-evolving space of various entries and flux of information never at rest, a heterogeneous space of many different access points, which can all create various meanings of objects. It can be said that an interesting part in searching through an archive is the unpredictability of retrieved information – we find always something different than we are looking for<sup>53</sup> – and that what is to be found in the archive is strictly dependent on the point of entry to it, on the both physical (location) and non-physical levels of access. It is true that the highest challenge in a well functioning archive is the meta-structure of description and linkage that enables the retrieval of the information.<sup>54</sup> The knowledge of the functionalities of the archive other than physical access is at least as significant as its practical aspects. The archive may unveil its arcana only to those who engage with it on a conceptual level, where the information is being created, the resource is being analysed and where one can learn about the economy of its function. The archive is a dynamic

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52 Eric Ketelaar, "Tacit Narrative: The Meanings of Archives," *Archival Science* 1(2001):134.

53 Often referred to as 'serendipity' of the archive.

54 This is also why the digitisation of paper archives is very time-consuming due to the network of metadata that must be created to enable the retrieval of the digitised documents.

entity and structures as much as documents are created in constant reorganisation, addition and loss. The archive is thus not only the physical realm of papers, files and objects of different kind, but a conceptual realm of thought and interpretation, of tacit and embodied knowledge, and a condition of possibility for a multitude of readings.<sup>55</sup>

### 8.5 Beyond the Material Repository: Towards the *Virtual and Real*

Although the written form is a privileged kind of archival information, it is necessary to question whether an archive can be purely material, and following this, is it merely the material sphere of the archive that shapes the identity of media installations? The written is, according to Groys who recalls Derrida, a process that aims at compensation for the loss of origins, is always insufficient in relation to the statement, and always additive.<sup>56</sup>

Can we envision a pile of documents and records without any supplementary information, that is, an archivist who *knows* where to retrieve something, and knows his/her way through corridors filled with drawers that all look the same? Would a conservation or museum archive be possible without its non-physical, non-material sphere? Clearly, archives are activated by their interpretation; yet what is interesting in this context is the archival sphere of non-physicality, in which archives are being constructed, understood and maintained.<sup>57</sup> The material archive is a collection of static documents and is only partial without its supplementation by unarticulated, implicit knowledge and memory. Accordingly, even the outermost detailed archival record resting in the physical sphere of archival repository is not complete unless supplemented by implicit knowledge.

To illustrate this, let us shortly return to the example of the test reinstallation of *Arche Noah* in 2008. At the time, *Arche Noah* was documented solely at its disassembled stage recovered two years earlier from the external depot, and with the exemption of a photograph illustrating the work in its shape from the 1990s, neither instructions nor drawings for its installations existed that could be supportive for the reinstallation. A team consisting of conservators and technicians, and Paik's assistant, Saueracker, was engaged in the process of reassembling the work. To envision the challenge that the team faced, one can only imagine a pile of (unnumbered) slats, beams and bars, fixtures, animals, TV sets and playback equipment lying on a gallery floor. The gradual process of reinstallation took place by adjusting one compilation of supporting beams to another, one set of slats to another, with the traces of their screwing point as guidance. The knowledge was constructed and re-constructed in situ on the

55 Derrida maintains that every archival interpretation is its enrichment, and that is precisely why the archive is an anticipation of the future. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 68 and 18 quoted in Ketelaar, "Tacit Narrative," 138.

56 Boris Groys, *Logik der Sammlung* (München: Carl Hanser, 1997), 201.

57 In conjunction with the archival research and its objects, Ketelaar goes so far as to maintain that documents and files do not speak for themselves but rather reflect what the researcher wants the documents to say. Depending on generations accessing the archive, the production of meaning is subject to change. Ketelaar, "Tacit Narrative," 139.

basis of memories of technicians and Saueracker's nearly twenty-year-old recollection of the installation of *Arche Noah* at Weisses Haus and its subsequent exhibitions in the 1990s. The observation of the team working at the site (and the documentation of the process) leads to the assumption that it was *Arche Noah* emerging as a construction of memories and knowledge at the point of becoming explicit, and the fragmented physicality of the work. The archive appeared as something subjective, carried in the minds of those who knew which elements fit together and how they should be assembled. In a collective effort of those involved, the work's identity was being constructed on in situ based on data neither accessible nor viewable to any of the team members. By no means is *Arche Noah* the only and extreme example of the non-physical sphere of archival knowledge. In examining other multimedia artworks more closely, museum re-installation practices are only partially based on archival documentation and partially precisely on this non-physical sphere of the archive.

In thinking about archives and their role in shaping the identity of works of art, one has to take into consideration dimensions other than just the material one. Archives are more than physical repositories. Archives exist on another intangible, non-palpable and non-physical level of being,<sup>58</sup> which is not as many suggest metaphorical, abstract and conceptual; rather, I suggest, it is *virtual and real*.<sup>59</sup> The virtual, implicit sphere of an archive is neither fully expressed or demonstrated nor clearly classified. Beyond the privilege of a haptic experience, the virtual sphere of the archive lives its silent existence merely implied. This implicit, virtual sphere of the archive is constituted by subject-oriented tacit knowledge, memory, non-embodied skills (yet not excluding the relation between body and mind), competencies, and system of knowledge concerning the retrieval of information that is not being formulated in any form of written instruction (this may involve retrieving the information in the physical archive). The link between the non-physical sphere of the archive and its tangible form lies in the potentiality of the former to become the latter in the process of explication and formulation. I will explain the concept of virtual and real in the discussion of actualisation in section 9.3. Akin to the physical archive, the virtual archival dimension is constituted by a rhizome of interconnected terminals and permeating spheres and is crucial in creating the identity of artworks. Accordingly, until the time of its re-installation, *Arche Noah* was inexistent as a physical object; rather, it existed in the virtual dimension of the archive.

Worth mentioning in this context is the concept of the archive and the repertoire put forward by Diana Taylor from the perspective of performance studies. Expanding on the notion of knowledge, Taylor posits that the archival document must be supplemented by embodied cultural practices such as ritual, dance and cooking, which is not considered knowledge.<sup>60</sup> My concept of the non-physical archive and Taylor's repertoire share their

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58 Non-physical meaning not having a material existence that one could independently consult.

59 For the idea of virtual and real, see Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 96-98.

60 Taylor, "The Archive and the Repertoire," 16-32.

unquestionable necessity of existence in order for the art forms to endure (both performance and multimedia) and the insufficiency of there being a physical archive alone. For Taylor, the repertoire enacts embodied memory and all sorts of ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge.<sup>61</sup> Although similar in the involvement of people as ‘transmitters’ of the knowledge, my understanding of the non-physical sphere of the archive assumes the act of actualisation, which takes place on the basis of both the physical and non-physical archive to be discussed shortly (in section 9.4).

## 8.6 The Non-Physical Dimension of the Archive: Memory and Tacit Knowledge

During the research for this thesis, the most eminent encounter with the virtual dimension of an archive took place in Harayuku, Tokyo, at the Watari-um Museum of Contemporary Art. My interview with Etsuko Watari, the daughter of Paik’s then most prominent mentor and gallery owner in Japan, Shikusho Watari, revealed that in fact knowledge of Paik and his artworks in their collection resides solely in the Watari family’s memory.<sup>62</sup> Paik was regarded as a family member; the relationship between him and the Wataris was close and resulted in spontaneous events, long telephone calls and the creation of works that were never palpably documented. Indeed such documentation was not possible – a situation common between family members. For a long time, retaining its status as a gallery, Watari-Um only became a museum in the 1990s. This is also one of the reasons the knowledge about the artworks including their number, components, mode of assembly and further characteristics has never been captured in written form. Rather it has been passed on as oral accounts and will cease to exist once the person who ‘knows’ it passes away.

Memory is related to a capacity to remember, and to collect and recall experiences and knowledge. One can speak of a good or bad memory and its instability according to the degree with which we are able to recall things. As I suggested in section 8.1, scholars have related memory to the archive, primarily discussing the memory in contrast to its physical dimension, but also emphasising the role of the archive in constructing cultural memory.<sup>63</sup>

The issue of memory in the virtual sphere of the archive may be illustrated using the example of Sigmund Freud’s analysis of a *Mystic Writing Pad*. In his essay *A Note Upon the Mystic Writing Pad* (1925), Freud discerns between the materialised portion of his mnemonic apparatus as a permanent memory trace and the sphere engraved in the deeper level of his

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61 Ibid.

62 Etsuko Watari (curator of Watari-Um), in discussion with the author, October 2012.

63 Arjun Appadurai, “Archive and Aspiration;” and Kluitenberg, “Towards a Radical Archive.”

consciousness.<sup>64</sup> To visualise his example and explain the function of the layered system of the perceptual apparatus of the human mind, Freud recalls the technique of ancient writing on tablets of clay or wax and their modern translation in the contrivance of the ‘Mystic Writing Pad.’<sup>65</sup> And although Freud’s assertion is closely related to the sphere of the human mind, I nevertheless propose to implement the example of a Mystic Writing Pad to my concept of the archive. The pad is well known as a children’s toy. To use the pad, one has to inscribe a note using a pointed tool or a fingernail on the plastic covering sheet that rests on a thick waxen board. The notes are rendered removable by lifting the covering sheet away from the board. It is the contact between the sheets that renders the note visible in the form of dark traces. Now, have the notes been removed entirely? If one inspects the deeper layer, the notes still exist but do not manifest on the surface. In my concept of the virtual sphere of the archive, the Mystic Writing Pad has a metaphorical function. Its deeper layer, which preserves the notes despite new inscriptions on its surface, may stand for a deep sphere of the memory of an archive, and, as a consequence, proving that there can never be *not* a physical trace. New inscriptions and practices of re-installations of artworks constantly supplement the archive and, consequently, the deep virtual archival level grows continuously in response to them. There is a dark side to this growth, however. The ever-expanding body of archival information and inscriptions may stifle the artwork, blocking future possibilities of its materialisation. Archival erasure and making room for new experiences might enable a certain freshness necessary to any reconstruction.

Memory relates to tacit knowledge – a next crucial point in my discussion on the virtual sphere of the archive – in the way it renders the recollection possible. Furthermore, the memory in its orientation towards the past is distinct from tacit knowledge, which is in present, or rather *is in the process of constant becoming*.<sup>66</sup> The notion of tacit knowledge has been scrutinised by the historian and philosopher of science Michael Polanyi and his heirs.<sup>67</sup> Polanyi maintains that knowledge exists that fails to be articulated by verbal means. As opposed to explicit knowledge that is formulated in words, numbers and figures, tacit knowledge has not been codified, and is subjective and related to experience. The transfer of explicit knowledge may take place by sharing data, specifications and procedures and stand in opposition to tacit knowledge, which is difficult to capture. Most importantly for my later argument, however, Polanyi posits that *all knowledge is rooted in tacit knowledge*. If we were to accept this proposition, the logical consequence would lead to the statement that the archive

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64 Sigmund Freud, “A Note Upon the Mystic Writing-Pad,” in *The Archive, Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed. Charles Merewether (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press; London, Whitechapel Gallery, 2006), 20–24. Originally published as “Notiz über den Wunderblock, 1925: The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud.” Vol. XIX, 1923–25.

65 Freud, “A Note Upon the Mystic Writing-Pad,” 21.

66 This distinction somewhat echoes the Deleuzian discussion on the pure ontological memory and its relation to the virtual. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*.

67 Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

is rooted in tacit knowledge on the basis of which it becomes explicated in written narratives. Contrary to propositional knowledge, tacit knowledge is contained in statements that express its personal nature, for example: 'I believe...' 'something tells me...' The tacit dimension of this knowledge is captured by one of Polanyi's famous formulations that 'we know more than we can tell.'<sup>68</sup> Scientific models cannot contain tacit knowledge due to their nature – it is being 'known' without being articulated. Tacit knowledge is disclosed in the judgements of the person who possesses it, thus it is always personal and related to the person who 'knows it.' Because tacit knowledge is constituted by the relationship between the person who knows and that what is being known, it is not simply transferable. In conservation studies, tacit knowledge was introduced by Ijsbrand Hummelen and Tatja Scholte in relation to the preservation and presentation of ephemeral artworks in museums.<sup>69</sup> In the essay 'Sharing Knowledge for the Conservation of Contemporary Art: Changing Roles in a Museum Without Walls?' (2004), we are introduced to the role of the unspoken procedures, unformulated in documentation, that are crucial in conservation practices linked with contemporary art. Hummelen and Scholte suggest that by means of capturing diverse information in the course of the re-installation or production of a work of art, the transmission of the meaning of an artwork and the artist's intentions can be obtained. So, rather than remaining in the realm of the unspoken and unformulated, the implicit knowledge of installation techniques, instruments used and implemented methods is being eventually externalised, transmitted by way of a written recount. All in all, the value of their contribution lies in the recognition of the significance of tacit knowledge in conservation, even though in their essay it eventually shifts to the explicated form of conservation documentation.

With particular relation to the concept of the archive presented in this thesis, tacit knowledge is not transferable to a written domain. That is not to say that the tacit knowledge has not yet de facto been written, but rather that it refuses formulation per nature. The written is a place reserved for explicit knowledge, so that the allocation of the knowledge in the document renders it of necessity explicit. In everyday museum practice, there is a dimension of the archive in which we – as creators and 'users' – are tacitly engaged, but which stays beyond what is, so to say, consciously knowable. In the archive, tacit knowledge constitutes the meta-level of archival awareness and encompasses a range of issues starting from simple practicalities of locating and storing information to gaining the complex knowledge of an artwork's and a collection's function and meaning. Often, it is concealed from direct observation and introspection. So for example, if a member of a conservation department receives an instruction from the artist related to the installation of his work to be displayed in an upcoming exhibition, the record is classified and printed or stored in a respective folder in the registry or in a databank. These records are retrievable by means of a set of actions

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68 Ibid., 4.

69 Hummelen and Scholte, "Sharing Knowledge."

internally known, yet rarely articulated or rendered in written form. It also sets off a range of actions that are not related to the archive – a head of department is consulted, a technician is informed and preparation for the incorporation of the instruction is undertaken. As Polanyi puts it, ‘in an act of knowing we attend from something to attending to something else; namely, from the first term to the second term of tacit relation.’<sup>70</sup> Without conscious attention, actions are being undertaken and records are being formed and deposited in a certain way. When the work requires technical assistance – the update of a format, a particular cabling, the adjustment of a plug to local standards or the calibration of display apparatus, the related data and resources are retrievable in various locations and with the help of various specialists in the museum. The system of such retrieval is an internal tacit knowledge that is inherent to the professionals of a particular museum in which the archive is located. This often comes to the fore when a new person is introduced to the departmental team; his/her knowledge about the functionalities of a department and archive may only be built up gradually and in line with his/her own attitude that is developed during the course of familiarisation with the system.

Tacit knowledge is constituted by (non-embodied, virtually present) skills, attitudes and social relations of persons involved in creating the archive. If we were to think about the object and its environment as an ecological system – a system involving organisms and their environment and all sorts of relations and interactions – this sphere of the archive would involve what Guattari classifies as social, mental and environmental ecologies.<sup>71</sup> The issues of institutional hierarchy and social relations, just like the mental constitutions of persons involved (affection or disapproval) and environmental circumstances, would shape the knowledge about the work. The emotional dimension of the archive is manifested by the way in which records are gathered and how specialists approach the artwork. For example, and despite the conservation premise that all objects should be treated with the same degree of attention, the presence of personal preferences of those involved in the re-creation or installation of a work cannot be denied. These preferences can have an enormous impact on the way works are handled and shaped. This results in a significant role that ought to be assigned to the attitudes of actors that engage with the artworks and with the archive that ‘records’ them. Accordingly, although part of an institution and supposedly objective and impartial, the archive never remains unbiased or detached from personal factors. The papier-mâché animals that make up part of *Arche Noah*, for example, on the occasion of the EnBW exhibition were dismissed not only on the grounds of financial burden to conserve them prior to the installation. In circumstances when a judgement was required and no instructions existed, the decisions involved their estimation as an inartistic product of child’s play. Based on subjective tacit knowledge, judgements and the implementation of phronesis – practical

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70 Planyi, *The Tacit Dimension*, 10.

71 Guattari, “The Three Ecologies.”

knowledge discussed in section 9.2 – the decisions made for the reinstallation of *Arche Noah* dramatically shaped its appearance.

Tacit knowledge, being personal, belongs to and characterises those who possess it. This is another reason why it is impossible for the archive, both on its virtual and its physical level, to be conceptualised as something centralised. Both tacit and explicit knowledge are by nature dispersed. In the purview of tacit knowledge, and expanding the archive beyond a museum, it may be said that the archive is constituted by an atomised knowledge of many individuals.

The tacit knowledge of the artwork that becomes part of the archive is not only related to the functionalities of a museum. It is the entire range of persons involved in the re-installation of a work that shapes the archival content. Artist's assistants, curators and technicians of artists' estates are all in possession of implicit knowledge which, remaining unformulated, manifests itself in the ways of practical dealings with artworks. In my professional experience, I have often encountered this type of tacit knowledge that refused to become explicable on any formal level. While observing the test reinstallation of *Arche Noah*, for instance, Paik's assistant Saueracker responded to our questions related to his method and reason for decisions that were being made with the formulation 'one just *has to understand* how Paik worked.' The tacit knowledge of Paik's long-term collaborator refuses to be grasped by the way of experiencing his work, and only an intensive engagement with his practices, attitudes and methods may give an impression of its impact on re-installation procedures. Here, the process of 'black boxing' put forward by the French philosopher and sociologist Bruno Latour may help us understand the situation and link us again to the issue of accessibility.<sup>72</sup> In the result of a sociological process, professionals and institutions hide detailed information about the object and processes, once they become obvious to insiders. Yet there is another side to this. For Saueracker – and similarly for others involved with the artist's oeuvre – maintaining the arcane mystery also signifies making it an *exclusive right*. Ensuring his engagement with Paik's oeuvre posthumously bears an economic and perhaps even narcissistic motive. Of importance here is to draw a line between the mystified and the real. The real aspects of tacit knowledge such as skills and attitudes should be discerned from the mystifying ones detectable in a generalised statement such as 'that is how Paik would do it.'

## 8.7 Conservation Narrative in Between Archival Realms

As I have shown, venturing into the archives inside and outside of a museum, the archive is a space of enclosure of diverse factual data, documentation narratives, description of materiality and leftovers of works, but, equally, oral accounts, tacit knowledge, skills and the competencies of those involved in shaping the trajectories of works. In the words of Sven

72 Bruno Latour, "Pandora's Hope," 23 and 191.

Spieker, the archive oscillates between embodiment and disembodiment, composition and decomposition, organisation and chaos.<sup>73</sup> In these ‘in between spaces’ of the immaterial and physical archive and in its zeal to collect knowledge about the artworks, conservation plays a crucial role. In fact, with the rise of new, concept-based art forms and multimedia installations, the documentation of these art forms began to stand metonymically for their conservation. Conservation produces the record for the archive and bases its decision on the archival record in a reciprocal, continuous exchange. Yet, as I suggested, there is a dimension of the archive that lies beyond the physical repository. This virtual dimension has a major impact on shaping the identity of artworks and is formed by tacit knowledge and memory.

This is the point where I propose to return to the notion of the conservation narrative, which, so far, has functioned to merge various temporalities in which and as which artworks exist (see section 7.9). Conservation, just like archival intervention, has to do with storytelling that accompanies the activation of the record.<sup>74</sup> Both tacit knowledge and memory, but also physical records are related to storytelling – the conservation narrative – on different levels of its creation. Although tacit knowledge can never, as I suggested, become fully explicated, there are certain levels of formulation on which it is encoded in the language of a conservation report and documentation. When writing a report, a conservator gives his/her personal perspective and affect (liking or apathy towards the object, for instance), translates his/her skills and abilities, makes the work of an interpretation. Rephrasing Appadurai, conservation narrative becomes a ‘deliberate project’ of imagination and interpretation,<sup>75</sup> an amalgam of translation of the physical and virtual sphere of the archive on different levels of formalisation. In collecting, classifying and interpreting traces, conservation narrative deprives the archive of its naivety and transforms the pile of loosely connected documents. The factor of naivety is – according to the American historian Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi – crucial for every collection of documents in order for them to be interpreted.<sup>76</sup> Because an archive is only available in fragments, regions and levels, the conservation narrative is based on interpretation of this archive and thus never objective. The relation between conservation narrative and the archive is reciprocal – conservation narratives also become a part of the archive and form it. On the one hand, the conservation narrative draws from the archive to be formulated, basing its content on archival traces and documents, and, on the other, it contributes to the archive, itself becoming part of the archive. Thus conservation narrative establishes a sense of history of the time and circumstances in which it is created.

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73 Spieker, *The Big Archive*, xi.

74 For storytelling in the engagement with the archive, see Ketelaar, “Tacit Narrative,” 139-140.

75 Appadurai uses the formulation ‘deliberate project’ in relation to his concept of the archive. Appadurai, *The Big Archive*.

76 Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi maintains that “ideally the archives should be naïve.” Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, “Memory: The Question of Archives” (conference paper, Freud Museum and the Société Internationale d’Histoire de la Psychanalyse, London, June 3 – 5, 1994), “Series Z: An Archival Fantasy,” accessed December 21, 2012, <http://www.psychomedia.it/jep/number3-4/yerushalmi.htm>