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

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CHAPTER 9.

Archival Implications

9.1 Archive in Perspective

The knowledge of the material and immaterial archive enables us to move to the most crucial aspect in the relationship between the archive and the identity of an artwork. The archive both as a physical repository and the virtual sphere constitutes what the work is in the present and entails a potentiality for its future. It does so in the process of actualisation based on conservation's creative involvement. Moreover, the archival potentiality for the various actualisations of the artwork acts retroactively. Every present actualisation enriches the archival potentiality and spawns the artwork's subsequent actualisations. So, rather than something static and distant, the archive becomes amalgamated with the work and becomes part of it, so much so that, as I will show, in relation to particular works, the archive itself becomes an artwork. Questioning the exclusiveness of such a relationship, and presenting the reader with the final archival implication of this chapter, I examine a case when an artwork becomes the archive of its own self, enclosing the trace and material record of its lifespan.

In this chapter, I will venture into the ways the archival 'content' is being used and what implications the involvement with the material and immaterial archive has for the reinstallation of multimedia artworks. I will shortly explore how reinstallations relate to the archival record under the consideration of decision-making guided by practical knowledge. In order to explain how multimedia artworks become materialised, I will argue that the transition from the virtual to the material takes place in the process of actualisation. In this process, conservation plays a major role. Lastly, I will show how the archive holds an answer to the problem of the duality of concept and materialisation and how the identity of artworks is sustained by the archive.

9.2 Archival Judgements

The reinstallation of multimedia artworks takes place on the basis of physical and virtual archives. In practice, the process preceding the installation commences with the consultation of various archival resources – artist's instructions and interviews, photographic and textual

documentation, reports of various kinds and all material evidence. Human resources – curators, conservators, technicians and, if possible, artists' living assistants and persons engaged in the work's earlier realisations – are mobilised. These actors activate their knowledge and skills drawing from memory and translating their subjective tacit knowledge into the palpable domain. At the moment of the re-installation of a multimedia work, the role of conservators is essential. The knowledge of the archival system and the selection of information from the quantity that rests in the archive are subject to judgment and sanctioning, meaning permission dependent on context. Decisions are made on the basis of the archive, regardless of whether the artist is living or not. It is, however, not just a one-way process of judgements being made in order to activate particular knowledge and documents from the archive. Conservation also has the ability to judge which information may enter the archive to become a potential basis for future re-installations of an artwork. In this respect we may question the principle guiding such judgements and the possible set of rules and laws governing them.

Despite the way it has sought to distance itself in recent decades from the tradition of restoration, conservation lacks rules and laws governing re-installation and documentation practices. Frequently, decisions are being made on the basis of former decisions documented and registered in archival records or embodied in practices of actors acquainted in various ways with artistic oeuvres. The facts are being interpreted on the basis of rational thinking with knowledge encompassing conservation tenets, ethics and its practical implementation. Such practical knowledge, I suggest, guides the decision-making in conservation and legitimates the justification of what is being drawn from and what has contributed to the archive. Let us now look into the origins of the notion of practical knowledge.

Practical knowledge – *Phronesis* – was introduced by Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (350 BC).[77] In his analysis of wisdom and intellectual virtues, Aristotle draws a distinction between theoretical wisdom, *sophia*, an ability to discern reality and *episteme*, a knowledge which is built up logically and teachable. Accordingly, *phronesis* is a capability of rational considerations that can deliver palpable effects. Much in line with conservation's role in judgements in relation to the archive, *phronesis* involves the ability to decide how to achieve a certain end. But more than a sheer skill (*technê*), it is also the ability to reflect upon good ends, in Aristotelian terms consistent with 'good living.' Placing sophia higher than phronesis on the scale of wisdom, Aristotle contends that the highest pursuit of wisdom requires both, for phronesis facilitates sophia. Although the Aristotelian proposition elucidates the kind of practical knowledge adapted by conservation, I propose to have a closer look into the issue of judgement related to the reinstallation of artworks.

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[77]   *Phronesis* is often translated as 'prudence.' For an account of the Aristotelian notion of Phronesis and ethics, see: Richard Kraut, "Aristotle's Ethics," *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Spring 2012), accessed October 10, 2012, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2012/entries/aristotle-ethics/.

In conservation of multimedia art, the kind of judgement implemented is that of a reflective judgement. The term 'reflective judgment' comes from Kant.[78] Whereas the determinative or subsumptive judgment of knowledge subordinates the particular to the concept, the reflective judgment of aesthetic and teleological judgment starts with the particular and seeks the concept to fit it, on the basis of the agreement of the community or 'common sense' (sensus communis). So when we say 'this is beautiful,' we anticipate the possible agreement of other people, rather than it being a purely individual taste, yet it is an agreement based first of all on the sensuous experience of something particular, rather than a universal concept. It is a matter of starting with the particular and applying judgment in the context of a social discourse to find the rule that fits it, rather than starting with the rule and applying it top-down.

The reflective judgement in conservation may be compared with what the German philosopher and Heidegger's contemporary Hannah Arendt understood as practical (as opposed to theoretical) reason. Combining the Aristotelian and Kantian notions of judgment, Arendt posits that phronesis is a forerunner of the notion of judgement as an ability to measure proportions in political and artistic matters.[79] For Arendt, phronesis has to do with judgment in a particular situation. Similarly, in legal theory, the law itself cannot determine its application for which a judge and jury is necessary. The council decides whether and which law applies to the situation and whether there possibly are mitigating circumstances. For instance, in the British system, preceding cases themselves become part of the law. Similarly, conservation decisions based on the archive and shaping of an artwork's identity are based on judgements implementing not only rational and practical knowledge, but preceding decisions. For instance, *Arche Noah*'s lost video footage seen initially on the set of monitors placed on the floor at Weisses Haus (closed-circuit video feed of the neighbouring canal in Hamburg) has not been questioned ever since *Arche Noah* lost its site specificity. Similarly, the set of plants is now perceived as intrinsic to *Arche Noah*'s composition. Hypothetically, the plants have a good chance to become a permanent element of *Arche Noah*'s future installations, contrary to the animals, whose absence during the two re-installations in 2008 and 2009 renders them a variable in future decisions. The aspect of judgement in the adaptation of *TV Clock, Moon is the Oldest TV*, *Arche Noah* and *TV Garden* in relation to spatial conditions is addressed in section 5.6. From a slightly different angle, if we recall the Stedelijk Museum curator's wish to replace *TV Buddha*'s statue with a similar one in order to be able to display it in a climatically non-tempered exhibition space (see section 2.2), his judgements approximated a wide range of cases whereby multimedia installations became divorced from the particular physicality

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78   Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), sections 4-7 and 74-75.

79   Lewis Hinchman and Sandra Hinchman, eds., *Hannah Arendt Critical Essays* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), 352-353.

of sculptural and/or technical elements, Paik's *TV Garden* being an example. In this context it is also worth recalling Paik encouraging Vitiello to 'use his judgement' while installing *TV Garden* (see section 1.2).[80] At this point, we will shortly return to the story of *Canopus*. As I pointed put, the reconstruction of the hubcap was not feasible due to the value assigned to the painted inscriptions; yet, at the same time, and based on experiences drawn from similar cases, *Canopus'* monitors, chassis and playback device (together with the data) were modified entirely and/or replaced. Perhaps a precedent case would allow circumventing the preservation of the historic material by reconstructing the *Wirkung* of the work, rather than favouring a fetish, as it were. Certainly, from the perspective of contemporary multimedia installations, the complicating factor in making decisions is clearly the impossibility of applying old scenarios and principles known from traditional works. While the codex continues to be developed, judgements increasingly rely on comparative methods, study and decisions made in comparable cases.

To resume, in its judgements and interpretations of the archive, conservation relies neither solely on the scientific knowledge of general truths nor on sheer technical know-how, but, rather, links knowledge, virtue and reason.[81] Accordingly, in deciding what is specific on the basis of the archive, conservation balances the proportion of technê and episteme, and contextualises them to the situation of the temporal present. It does so, as I will show in the next section, while actualising the work of art from the archive.

9.3 From the Virtual to the Actual

In the pervious chapters I have argued that an artwork may be realised in a number of instantiations, which have an impact on its changeable character. In my concept of the archive in relation to the identity of artworks and addressing the potential of artworks to change, I will use the dialectic of the virtual and actual derived from the philosophical projects of Bergson and Deleuze. This will help me in my argument to move away from the constraints of realisation, which is related to possibility rather than potentiality as explained in the following. The dialectic of virtual and actual resonates what has already been argued regarding the non-physical sphere of the archive and the potentiality, which lies in its actualisation to the physical sphere.

The idea of the coexistence of virtualities and actualities is rooted in Bergsonian philosophy and the differentiation that has been discussed by Deleuze in relation to the

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80   *Preserving the Immaterial.*

81   My idea of the practical knowledge of conservation leans on the argument of David Coulter and John R. Wiens, who, in explaining the notion of phronesis in relation to Aristotle and Kant, maintain that the phronesis is not simply knowledge, but an amalgam of knowledge, virtue and reason that enables people to decide what they should do. David Coulter and John R. Wiens, "Educational Judgement: Linking the Actor and the Spectator," *Educational Researcher* Vol. 31, No. 4. (2002): 16.

notion of *possibility* and *virtuality*.[82] Possibility refers to the somehow already known physical state of before; its realisation presupposes a certain form. The difference that Bergson draws between something real and something possible becomes manifest while observing that the real action has already passed, and the possible action has not (yet).[83] The process of realisation presupposes the dependence on limitation and resemblance, where the image of the possible that is being realised must be mirrored in the real. The exception here is the concept itself – where the difference between the possible and the real does not apply. Therein, as Deleuze observes, lies the problem. In the realisation, only some 'possibles' 'pass' to the real, while others are repulsed due to the implied limitation.[84] The pre-existence of the possible, its preformed, ready-made form passes over to existence following the order of successive limitations.[85] In contrast, virtuality lacks the pre-existence in any possible form, but exists, rather, in a state of potentiality lying in the sphere of the unknowable.[86] Both virtual and actual states are real states. Following the Deleuzian thought, it might be argued that the states in which artworks exist in the archive are virtual and real (without being actual and ideal, and without being abstract). Because the virtual does not have to be realised but actualised, it follows the rules of difference and creation, rather than of limitation and resemblance.[87] There is another consequence that Deleuze points to. While the real resembles the possible that it realises, the actual is not the resemblance of the embodied virtual.[88] Eventually, turning against the concept of the possible as a false problem, Bergson bases his notion of evolution precisely on the transfer between the virtual and the real.[89] Additionally – and highly significant for the purpose of my argument – he, too, equates the actualisation with the creation.[90]

Following the Bergsonian dialectic of the virtual and the actual, the virtual, as a pure qualitative differentiation, might be seen as equivalent to the potential for changeability of works drawn from the archive. This takes place on the basis of all the differences in the works'

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82   For Bergson, the idea of difference stands for the understanding of duration, which may reveal itself in one of its aspects or nuances: 'Duration is what differs, and what differs is no longer what differs from something else but what differs from itself. What differs has become itself a thing, a substance. … Real time is alteration, and alteration is substance. Difference in nature is thus no longer between two things or rather two tendencies, difference of nature is itself a thing, one tendency opposing itself to the other.' Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 97.

83   For further elaboration on this matter related to Cage's musical theory, see Branden W. Joseph, "Chance, Indeterminacy, Multiplicity," in *The Anarchy of Silence: John Cage and Experimental Art,* Yve-Alain Bois *at al.* (Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 2010), 223.

84   Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 97.

85   Bergson ends up suggesting that, in fact, it is not the real that resembles the possible but the possible that resembles the real, because it has been extracted from the real 'like a sterile double.' He later dismisses the notion of the possible in favour of the virtual, continuing, however, to base the discussion on their dialectic. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 96-98.

86   Ibid.

87   Ibid., 97.

88   Ibid.

89   Ibid., 98.

90   Ibid.

virtual quality at the moment of its actualisation. Conservators carry not only the responsibility for this transfer, but are of necessity *creatively* involved in the process of actualisation which is, as we have learned from Bergson, by nature, creative. The virtual presence of an artwork in the archive awaits its actualisation anew as one of the many virtual potentialities. The actualisation will never outperform the potentiality involved in the virtual. This potential for many different actualisations inherent to an artwork's virtual quality and ready to unfold on the basis of the archive is nothing other that the artwork's inherent changeability (see chapter 5). In other words, what we perceive as the changeability of artworks may become their potentiality to differentiation within their virtual quality embodied in the process of transformation from the virtual to the actual.

The archival form of a multimedia artwork, its virtual form, will thus stand for its identity, an identity that persists through time and notwithstanding the changeability of its various actualisations to which it is open. It accepts no linearity and no sense of pro- or regression, rendering each actualisation of an artwork equally significant. The openness of an artwork to changeability guarantees on the one hand the occurrence of future actualisations based on and drawing from the virtual type, and on the other, the constant enhancement of the characteristics of type through its continuous actualisations. Hence, in its heterogeneous quality and temporal equivalence, the archive accommodates both the virtual type ready to be actualised, and the (historical and evidential) token of its actualisations.[91]

One last consequence of the dialectic of the virtual and real, and of the concept of actualisation, relates to its placement in the present. The actualisation from the archive takes always place in the present and thus has an *obligation* solely to the present. Here, it is relevant to recall the Bergsonian virtual past as in or co-extensive with the present as discussed in *Bergsonism.* For Bergson and Deleuze the past is not behind the present on a line of time, but rather it co-exists with it as shown by the example of the cone: if the present was not already the past as well, and the past present, the present would not have become the past (see section 6.4). From a different perspective, the actualisation of the archive might be seen as a driving force behind what Doane names '"presencing" of the past moment through the expansion of its length to present.'[92] It is, in other words, the process of the actualisation of the past as a form of experience of the present. This has two implications: first, archivisation is equivalent

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91   The concept of type and token stems from analytic aesthetics. Richard Wolheim introduces a distinction between type and token designating realisations of object – tokens, and the ideas – types, or, in traditional words, the one between singular and multiple arts. Richard Wollheim, *Art and its Objects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Linda Wetzel, *Types and Tokens: On Abstract Objects* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2009), 3; Jerrold Levinson, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). My idea of the virtual type expands this view with the perspective of the archive and archival actualisation. In conjunction with the discussion on time in chapter 6 related to the aspect of the artwork's existence in the present, and for a reformulation of the 'temporal equivalence,' it could be said that the type may be constituted by tokens of many different pasts, type here being a virtual palimpsest of a work's multiplicity.

92   Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 83.

with the process of deactivation from being in the present, a sort of loss of an actual state; second, actualisation is, of necessity, always something *new*, something that has *emerged by creation*.

9.4 Archival Actualisation: Back to Creative Conservation?

Increasingly in recent installation practices the archive has become a realm of *creative* implementation of conservators' competence and knowledge. This is best observed through the examples of multimedia artworks that incorporate perishable, restituable and ephemeral materials manifest in Paik's works imposing continuous cycles of exchangeability and re-arrangements. The creative qualities of conservator's activities in drawing from and contributing to the archive are different to those of artists involved in the creation of a work. The point here may lie in the differentiation between creation and *re-creation,* the latter meaning archival actualisation.

That this creative side of conservation and restoration has for decades been banned from the day-to-day repertoire of conservators' and restorers' activities may be reminiscent of the famous Brandian prohibition of entering the 'restricted sphere of the creative process.'[93] The roots for such a restriction might be sought in the fact that before conservation had achieved a status of a science, it was a craft where artists, artistic restorers or craftsmen 'refreshed' or 're-created' an artwork (of his/her, or of others) by overpainting it or adding new elements in the place of those lost to the sculpture.[94] A first sign towards the move away from creative intervention might be seen in *Capitolato* (1777) by the Italian Director of Restoration of Public Paintings in Venice, Pietro Edwards. He formulated a set of norms prohibiting the removal of old inpaintings and proclaimed the area of lacunae as the only location where new inpaintings were allowed to occur.[95] Furthermore, highly relevant for the development of conservation as a discipline known today and linked with its withdrawal from any creative actions was the activity of the Austrian and German art historians Alois Riegl and Gregor Dehio. Riegl's taxonomy of monument's values provided one of the clearest observations in the interpretation of the identity of tangible heritage, which, due to the spatial restrictions of this thesis, cannot be pursued further here. What is very interesting in relation to the creative aspects of the profession is that Dehlio and Riegl advocated conservation instead of restoration. I believe that the shift in taxonomy from 'restoration' to 'conservation' reflects the tendency to divorce the profession from its creative aspects. Somewhat emerged from the romantic cult of decay and age in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the critique of restoration

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93   Brandi, *Theory of Restoration*, 62.
94   The Laokoön group being a prominent example; see also chapter 6.
95   For Pietro Edwards, see Conti, T*he History of the Restoration and Conservation of Works of Art*, 181-220; see also Jilleen Nadolny, "History of Visual Compensation for Paintings," in *Conservation of Easel Paintings*, eds. Joyce Hill Stoner and Rebecca Rushfield (New York: Routledge, 2012), 578.

was most extensively expressed in Ruskin's *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849).[96] Ruskin believed that restoration falsifies the object – a relic of a past that communicates with the future – and renders the sign of history as the most valuable feature of an object unreadable.[97] Viollet-le-Duc instead, was a proponent of a permissive – if not creative – attitude towards reconstructions (see *Introduction* and section 6.2). As suggested, Viollet-le-Duc believed that restoration should be a process in which a building is reinstated 'in a condition of completeness which might never have existed at any given time.'[98] This implies a creative aspect of such a restoration relevant from the point of view of Voilla-le-Duc's revived reception in my thinking. The conservator Hanna Jędrzejewska had already acknowledged conservation's interpretative abilities in 1976. She wrote: 'The whole work of a conservator is a constant sequence of interpretations, as this is what guides his decisions and procedures.'[99] These interpretative aspects are reconfirmed by Helen Glanville, who, in the commentary to Conti's *The History of the Restoration and Conservation of Works of Art* (1988), writes: 'restoration cannot but modernise, interpreting according to its own frames of reference, so that these *re-creations* tell us more about the time in which they were carried out that the times and concerns of the original artist.'[100] In criticising preservation as a process of rendering works' relics and thus disabling new creation, Lowenthal sees a burden that disables a creative use of the past stating that 'we further isolate what we preserve.'[101] This critique clearly addresses the dismissal of creativity in conservation, which is focused on saving properties and artefacts rather than ideas and culture.[102] The idea of creativity in conservation is taken one step further by D.E. Cosgrove, who claims that in performing acts that intervene in the life of object, conservation may be regarded as 'creative intervention, subject to the same individual and social negotiations and struggles over meaning and representation as any other action.'[103] In more recent writings, the turn towards the acknowledgement of conservation as a creative profession is already recognisable in Muñoz Viñas *Contemporary Theory of Conservation* in

96   For the development of the appreciation of age and decay, see David Lowenthal, "The Value of Age and Decay," 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), 39-50.

97   Rée, "Auto-Icon," 2.

98   Jokilehto, *A History of Architectural Conservation*, 155.

99   Hanna Jędrzejewska, *Ethics in Conservation* (Stockholm: Kungl. Konsthögskolan Institutet för Materialkunskap, 1976), 41 quoted in Clavir, *Preserving What is Valued*, 41. According to Clavir, the interpretative capacity of conservation has been acknowledged by other authors such as Keyser and Weil. Ibid.

100   Glanville, "Introduction," xxi. My emphasis.

101   Lowenthal, "Material Preservation and its Alternatives," 71.

102   Ibid.

103   D.E. Cosgrove, "Should We Take It All So Seriously? Culture, Conservation and Meaning in the Contemporary World," 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), 259-266.

which he points to the issue of the 'fabrication of heritage' and postulates for conservation to become a 'creative activity.'[104]

With its roots in history, conservation has been marked by taboos and restrictions, following Nietzsche's apt observation that a profession is characterised precisely by things that its practitioner is forbidden to do.[105] Yet with multimedia installations, we are no more able to sustain the claim of the withdrawal from creative intervention in artworks, for every actualisation or reinstallation necessarily involves creative aspects. This is confirmed by the many examples of Paik's works – *Zen for Film*, *Arche Noah*, *TV Garden*, to name but a few – scrutinised in this thesis. That is not to say that the creativity of conservation appeared only with these types of media; rather, creativity has always been present in conservation in the way it tells stories about its objects (conservation narratives), interpreting and actualising them to the temporal and cultural context of the time in which it operated.[106] Moreover, the creative aspects of conservation often became manifest in the many transferred murals, lined, reframed and re-contextualised paintings and sculptures that populate our museums. It could thus be said that the creative aspects of conservation were not an invention of postmodernity, but became more explicit with the introduction of multimedia and contemporary works governed by the logic of recurrent materialisations and engagement with the archive.[107] The shape of conservation has not morphed entirely from the asceticism of holding back with its instruments and methods in confrontation with the supposed 'original;' rather, it crystallised and sharpened itself facing the openness of artworks to change in much shorter, condensed ranges of time (see also section 7.4). To paraphrase Latour's famous postulate – we have always, in that sense, been creative.[108] It may be said that the practices of multimedia installation taught conservation to express its creative side with more convenience.[109] In the words of Lowenthal:

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104   He refers to the fabrication of heritage as a result of a subjective 'act of taste' and the denial of objectivity in conservation. Furthermore, according to him, conservation might be seen as 'creative activity' whereas creativity is not only permissible in conservation, but desirable. Muñoz Viñas, *Contemporary Theory of Conservation*, 112-113 and 147-150. For the juxtaposition of 'pure conservation' and 'creative approach' see also Honório Nicholls Pereira, "Contemporary Trends in Conservation: Culturalization, Significance and Sustainability." *City and Time* 3/2 (2007): 22-23.

105   Keith Jenkins, *Re-Thinking History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), ix.

106   Examples of conservation's creative engagement may be seen in architectural conservation, for instance in the practices of *Anastilosis*, which aimed at the restitution of the substance of built heritage with the help of the first elements used (e.g. Acropolis in Athens).

107   Creative conservation is not exclusive to multimedia. The conservation of ethnographic objects, for instance, engages in issues of reconstruction and renewal. See Charles Stable, "Maximum Intervention: The Collaborative Renewal and Interpretation of a Maori War Canoe Between National Museum Scotland and Geige Nuku, Maori Artist," *Journal for Conservation and Museum Studies* 10/1 (2012): 8-18.

108   'We have always been modern.'

109   In the article *Creating Nam June Paik's TV Garden and Video Fish at Tate Liverpool* by Laura Davis, published in the *Liverpool Daily Post* on the occasion of Paik's British retrospective, the issue of 'creation' of both installations could not be expressed less clearly. Davis, "Creating Nam June Paik's *TV Garden* and *Video Fish* at Tate Liverpool."

> Nothing ever made has been left untouched, nothing ever made remains immutable; yet these facts should not distress but emancipate us … since to appreciate the past is to transform it.[110]

History is, as we have learned, a way of activating of the past, and any object of inquiry can be read differently using different discursive practices; the only commonality of these possibilities is the very fact of the difference that characterises potential readings over time and space.[111] According to the art historian Keith Jenkins:

> History is intersubjective and ideologically positioned; … Originals do not entail anything 'genuine;' that history is, in opposition to it being an art or a science, something else – something *sui generis*, a worldly, wordy language game played for real, and where the metaphors of history as science and history as art, reflect the distribution of power that puts those metaphors into play.[112]

Without a doubt, in creating its narratives, conservation *actively and creatively* invests in the history of artworks. Yet the productive acknowledgement of a creative power lying at the basis of conservation processes and the acts of decision making that accompany it may increase the emancipation of conservation as a discipline. This emancipation evokes a different attitude from within the field, also in its outside relations. It helps to ultimately free conservation from latching onto new developments in arts and curatorial practice – as a set of practices that, at least at its traditional core and from the perspective of a daily 'museum business,' has for long been too preoccupied with the meticulous but somewhat customised capture of the 'singular condition' of artworks by countless protocols manufactured in a clockwork-like manner.

Lastly, based on different conceptions of time and the idea of an archive as a place of potential actualisations of multimedia artworks, I propose that Viollet-le-Duc's idea is not entirely foreign to the new view of conservation proposed in this thesis. That is not to say, however, that by acknowledging creative aspects of conservation linked with Voillet-le-Duc's sense of restoration as re-creation we ought to free the object from traces of its lived trajectory or recreate it to an idealised condition. Rather, in order to actualise a multimedia artwork from the archive, the Voillet-le-Ducian perspective allows us to approach the archive with a creative attitude and without abandoning our responsibility towards the maintenance of the identity of a work. Creatively presencing the 'past' through the expansion of its length to the present and thus abandoning its isolation, conservation shifts the importance from the

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110   Lowenthal quoted in Muñoz Viñas, *Contemporary Theory of Conservation*, 111.
111   For a discussion of diverse interpretations of the past and the creation of different possibilities of historical account see Jenkins, *Re-Thinking History.*
112   Jenkins, *Re-Thinking History*, 56. In conjunction with this, I find Benjamin's assertion that to articulate the past historically does not mean to recognise it 'the way it was,' but rather 'to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at the moment of danger.' David S. Ferris "Introduction: Aura, Resistance, and the Event of History," in *Walter Benjamin: Theoretical Questions*, ed. David. S. Ferris (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 15.

artefact to its singnification (meaning its embeddedness in discourse and intertextuality); it actualises a multimedia artwork on the basis of the archive, drawing from the multiplicity of its virtual existence in a non-tangible dimension of the archive.

9.5 From the Archive to an Artwork and the Artwork Meaning Archive

The previous sections have suggested that conceiving of an artwork apart from its archive is unthinkable. The artwork is irreversibly bound with its archive; the archive shapes its identity and renders its actualisations dependent on the archival realm. It is, in fact, a dynamic part of the artwork, rather than some distinct and static repository of documents.

This connection is explicated particularly when the archive becomes an artwork in the absence of the latter, or in the case when the historical moment of the artwork has passed. Paik's deactivated participatory installations such as *Random Access*, discussed above, and the deactivated *TV Cello* (collection of the Museum Bochum) are often displayed in the form of an archive – there is additional information on the former activity of an deactivated, displayed artwork such as archival photographs and film. In this case, facing the deactivation of the work, the identity of an artwork is entirely taken over by the archive. The archive stands for the artwork, putting its records and relics on display.

Yet could this relationship be reversed? Can an artwork become an archive? I propose that it can.[113] *Untitled* (*Piano*) from the Museum of Modern Art Painting and Sculpture Collection in New York (Fig. 9.1) is an audible closed-circuit multimedia installation created by Paik in 1993. It consists of an upright piano, fifteen television sets, two cameras, two laser disc players, a floppy drive and an electric light.[114] *Piano* also exists in the Albright Knox Gallery's collection with a slightly different title – *Piano Piece* (1993, Fig. 9.2), and has taken shape of *Video Piano* (1999) at the Guy Pieters Gallery collection in Knokke Belgium (Fig. 9.5).[115] Like their titles, both MoMA's and Albright Knox Gallery's 'Pianos' are similar in many aspects. In both cases the upright piano is presented with an opened lid lit by an electric light. On top of the piano, one can see traditional cathode ray tube monitors of various forms and dimensions piled up in different positions into a compact block composition transmitting two video inputs. On both sides of the keys, as well as on the floor beneath them, one can see four smaller television sets. Whereas Albright Knox Gallery's *Piano Piece* seems to involve

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113   I draw a line between artistic practices that deliberately address or create archives from the artworks that may become archives during the course of their lives due to changing historical and technological conditions.

114   *Piano / Piano Piece* might be seen as a continuation of Paik's engagement with modified music instruments inspired by pianos manipulated by Cage already manifest in his prepared piano entitled *Klavier Integral* dated 1958-63. *Piano* is a tribute to Cage who died in 1992.

115   The provenance of various titles could have resulted as a variation of the Holly Solomon Gallery's *Untitled* (*Piano Piece*) – *Untitled* (*Piano*) at MoMA and *Piano Piece* at the Albright Knox Gallery. Later in this chapter I have abbreviated *Untitled* (*Piano*) to *Piano*.

a stool, MoMA's *Piano* does not. Manifest on the photograph from MoMA's database, a cascade of black cables falls from the monitors on both sides of the piano to the floor. They connect the televisions with their playback devices – laser disc players placed on the floor symmetrically on the left and right-hand side of the piano. In MoMA's *Piano*, the piano plays generic music – show tunes – whereas Albright Knox Gallery's *Piano Piece* plays a piece of music composed by Richard Teitlebaum especially for this work. On the monitors, images show Cage accompanied by Paik's hands playing music on the piano and Cunningham and his images as a child. Another six monitors in the ensemble show two videos, one of which is a live feed of the piano playing by itself (from the floppy disc) transmitted in real time by a video camera, while the other is a real-time video of the playing hammers transmitted from another camera.

I would like to point briefly to the main differences that the artworks' various images disclose. In one of them we can see Paik sitting in front of his piano with two large U-matic players situated to the left and right of the piano in the background; the spotlights appear to be absent (Fig. 9.4). A little camera directed to the keys of the piano is visible; the cabling is not concealed and thus seems to play an aesthetic role in the installation (Holly Solomon Gallery, New York, Fig. 9.3). On another image the TV compilation resembles the former with the four largest formats placed centrally (MoMA, Fig. 9.1). One spotlight is placed on the right-hand side of the piano, but the stool is missing. On the floor, on the left and right of the piano, one can recognise two different casings of playback equipment – laser disc players. Upon closer examination, the outermost right key of MoMA's *Piano* carries Paik's signature (Fig. 9.1). Another photograph depicts the piano with two tripods for a spotlight (on the right-hand side) and a camera (on the left-hand side), and a white stool situated in front of the keys (Albright–Knox Art Gallery, Fig. 9.2).[116] A camera is fixed on a supporting arm on the right-hand side of the piano. The compilation of TVs is slightly different than the one at MoMA. The playback devices are piled up inside a black cabinet behind the piano, which is different to other examples of the work with the symmetrical placement of these devices on either side of the piano. The cables are concealed; the installation looks orderly.[117]

The various instantiations of Paik's artworks realise the importance of the playback and display apparatus and show not only different compositional settings, but also a shifting balance between their sculptural presence and the technical function performed. Clearly, this is where the problem lies for conservation. What should be done if the equipment succumbs to wear and tear and technical obsolescence? The obsolescence of U-matic and laser disc players parallels the obsolescence of TV sets and poses the question of whether

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116   See "Nam June Paik, Piano Piece, 1993," Albright-Knox Art Gallery, accessed July 10, 2012, http://www.albrightknox.org/collection/search/piece:2450/.

117   The Belgian *Video Piano* (Guy Pieters Gallery) presents us with yet another view of Paik's interpretation of his earlier idea, which I cannot address here more extensively for spatial reasons.

the audio-visual apparatus has preponderantly the role of a carrier of an image or sound or whether it is also sculpturally significant.[118] Interestingly, Paik authorised the replacement of the earlier U-matic players with newer laser disc equipment upon MoMA's acquisition of *Piano* in 1993.[119] Now, the time has come to find a newer technology to replace the laser disc players and the floppy discs from which the piano plays the show tunes. Based on elaborate research, MoMA's conservation solution for the floppy disk is based on the addition of a new device (IQ Intelligent Player) next to the old one, which would take over the playback function.[120] Therefore the old apparatus would be retained in its documentary value rendering the generational replaceability of the playback equipment superfluous and circumventing the consequences of the removal of the older elements.

Would this also apply to the laser disc players? Their earlier replacement would suggest otherwise. The Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam holds another installation by Paik, *Hommage aan Stanley Brouwn* (1984), in which the playback apparatus – presenting a certain sculptural value – was recently replaced[121] (Figs. 9.6 and 9.7). Despite its radicalism, this solution confirms Paik's attitude towards the medium. In the words of Hanhardt: 'For him the medium was fundamental to the experience of the work. At the same time, he's open to the reality that media has changed, and that his work has to change with it.'[122] Relevant for my argument, MoMA considers maintaining the appearance of *Piano* with the old decks on either side and favours a future solution presupposing the concealment of the new playback device (DVD or computer hard drive) from the viewer. This solution would pose questions of honesty towards the viewer and render the deactivated apparatus a relic. This again refers to my concept of changeability, which, reflecting the ruling conservation culture may entail a

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118   In contemporary display and conservation discourse, the issue of replacing cathode ray tubes linked with their decreasing market availability and the emergence of new plasma and liquid crystal display technologies has recently became one of the most pressing with no obvious solution. The case of *Piano* was central to the *Collection Care* project initiated by Glenn Wharton at MoMA. In an interview with Jon Huffman, Wharton discussed the replacement of the picture tube. Huffman, interview.

119   Ibid.

120   Ibid.

121   *Hommage aan Stanley Brouwn* (nineteen monitors, two DVD players migrated from the earlier U-matic players, video, steel frame) was exhibited during *The Luminous Image* (14 September – 28 October 1984). In 1992, the museum acquired the work, which was installed to fit a small room. This 'site-specificity' had to be abandoned after the room was renovated and the installation no longer fit. With the new presentation in 2010, on the occasion of the exhibition *TV as..* (28 August 2010 – 15 May 2011), the installation was shown in a large room on the ground floor of the Temporary Stedelijk with a new set of monitors and playback equipment. The replacement of the playback equipment with DVD players, which took place on this occasion, just as the replacement of old TV sets with newer technology was, as the curator Bart Rutten puts it, dictated by pragmatism directed towards understanding the equipment from the point of view of its functional values (Rutten, discussion). In this context, it is interesting to note that the section of the exhibition in which *Hommage aan Stanley Brouwn* was presented was entitled 'TV as sculpture.' For details related to the creation of the work, see Nam June Paik, interview by the Netherlands Media Art Institute (NIMk), 1984, collection of NIMk, NIMk archive, accessed January 10, 2013, http://catalogue.nimk.nl/site/?page=%2Fsite%2Fart.php%3Fdoc_id%3D9073.

122   Alex Pham, "Art That Goes on the Blink," *Los Angeles Times*, October 4, 2004. Archive of the conservation department, Guggenheim Museum, New York.

change as a historical practice, in which the relic is deactivated yet retained, for its aesthetic, sculptural value and in terms of a historical instrumentalisation of sorts.[123] Such a solution is no less problematic that the replacement, which, in the absence of the artist faces the issue of the implementation of a new, state-of-the-art technology. Clearly, for the purposes of a museum, *Piano* also manifests the rationality and plausibility of narrowing down a changeable work to its institutional histories within which, and on the basis of which, it may be further reinterpreted and modified. *Piano* teaches us that the history of installation may be an institutional one – a history based on a singular archive on the basis of which it is written.

So it occurs to me that *Piano* collects traces of the generational shift of technology and mirrors the cultural-economical context of the times in which it is being conserved. This is also reconfirmed with regard to the transition of its data. MoMA transferred the laser disc player video data of *Piano* to archival Digibeta format and uncompressed QuickTime files for exhibition purposes.[124] In the search for the best and the most initial version of the tape supported by Paik's estate, the conservation department strives to retrieve the earliest U-matic three-quarter-inch tape. In addition to a Digibeta file that has already surfaced somewhere in the history of the work,[125] this creates an image of the multitude of data formats and forms of playback apparatuses that the work inherits.

Paik's *Piano Piece* is not the only example of the accumulation of traces of the artwork's own trajectory. Duchamp's *Network of Stoppages* that entails the *Young Man and Girl in Spring* not only discloses the heterogeneity of its temporal strata (see section 7.6), but also becomes an apt instance that illustrates how a traditional painting may, in a sense, 'archive' its strata.' Although it lies beyond the scope of this thesis, this idea could be pushed further and be tested in relation to a range of traditional media, such as cut, framed and reframed, lined and re-lined paintings, repainted canvases and polychrome sculptures, and perhaps even examples of architectural heritage, reconnecting the argument to the heterotemporality of artworks in section 6.1 and 7.6. Furthermore, the many musealised forms of early conceptual art provide us with examples of such 'accumulative' artworks.[126] For instance, in reconstructing the exhibition history of the conceptual work *Glass (one and three)* by Joseph Kosuth (1965), not yet having advanced the concept of the archive, the conservator Sanneke Stigter points

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123   One aspect remains unresolved, so it seems. If we reconsider Taruskin's argument regarding the instrumentalisation of a musical performance in this context (see chapter 3), what would it mean, then, to implement a deactivated instrument, for the perception of the 'authentic' performance?

124   Digibeta is a frequently used abbreviation for Digital Betacam.

125   Huffman, interview.

126   Often the various executions of LeWitt's wall drawings from an expanding archive affect their following realisations. Stretched across geographically remote locations, perhaps one could go so far as to conceive of an artwork as an archive in a global sense.

to its various materialisations dictated by the instructions.[127] The new depictions of a sheet of glass leant against the wall challenge conservation not only with the question of the addition to the work and re-performance of the instruction in the absence of the artist, but also with the presence of the former photographs that have already acquired historic value. Rather than being a singularity occurring in space and time 'accompanied' by the documentation, the work accumulates itself as an ever-expanding archive. Similarly, yet related to questions of site-specificity in the large project *Drifting Producers* (2004) by Flying City, the art historian Tatja Scholte introduces an expanding artwork that, in my view, adds to its content objects and stories as it moves through geographically distant locations.[128]

To sum up, in its ability to store the physical variants of diverse equipment and the mental, economical and political attitudes of the parties involved, *Piano* becomes an archive of its own changeability, an evolving container of information with a guarantee of future extension. Artworks, following Heidegger, do not simply disappear into the world but, rather, create their world.[129] They may become archival entities where past, present and future interpenetrate. In other words, in the way in which artworks involve pro- and retentions of their various instantiations, they accumulate the past in the present. Interestingly, these characteristics refuse enclosure into a singular trajectory of one variant of an artwork. *Piano*'s and *Piano Piece*'s existence at MoMA's and Albright-Knox Gallery's collection introduces another level of the record of the changing characteristics of works. Clearly, artworks became archives of their own changeable selves.

9.6 Archival Turn: Temporal Materiality, Endurance and Continuity

The archive in its physical and virtual sphere, as I have shown, takes on an active role in harbouring and creating the identity and maintaining the continuity of works of art. It 'contains' the potentiality for transformation of changeable artworks that have been introduced in the course of this thesis. The singular form of 'the archive' that is often used in common language or as it occurs in an illusory picture of archival centrality is contradicted by its scattered and dispersed character, an entity that is – in both its physical and non-physical quality – heterogeneous and in the process of enduring reorganisation and classification. It is this apparent messiness and heterogeneity on a multitude of levels that render the accessibility of the archive – and thus the available information on the artwork – only partial and fragmentary.

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127   Sanneke Stigter, "How Material is Conceptual Art? From Certificate to Materialization: Installation Practices of Joseph Kosuth's Glass (one and three)," in *Inside installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks*, eds. Tatja Scholte and Glenn Wharton (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press), 69-80.

128   Tatja Scholte, "The Impact of Conservation on Site-Specific Works of Art," *New Strategies in the Conservation of Contemporary Art*, accessed January 02, 2013, http://www.newstrategiesinconservation.nl/summaries-of-projects/65-summary-project-tatja-scholte.

129   Heidegger, "The Origin of Work of Art."

Decisions about future embodiments of artworks are being made on the basis of this archive. Reciprocally, the consequent embodiments of works contribute to the archival domain. The archive does not reduce an existent object to a series of its past manifestations; it is not a static domain of records – that of an artworks' changeability in retrospect – but a dynamic entity directed to the future. New iterations of artworks produced from the archive enter and transform it; thus the formation of the archive is itself recursive. The archive becomes a condition of possibility for the artwork's change, remaining in a relationship with a slowly, but continuously changing subject – the conservator and a custodian, but also an observer.

The archive is, as I suggested only partially of material, documentary record, harbouring a variety of documentation of the work's past manifestations – reports, instructions, scores, contracts, correspondence and manuals. It also entails a non-physical dimension of tacit knowledge, memory, skill and, to the same extent, metadata related to its own functionality. The archive-artwork relationship is thus reciprocal on both the non-physical and physical level; the future manifestations of all examples of Paik's artworks described in this thesis will draw from the archive created in the course of their former materialisations. This relationship may go so far as to create a situation in which the archive may take over the role of an artwork and that an artwork, in certain cases, may become an archive of its self.

The archive holds an answer to the dialectic of the concept and material from the beginning of this thesis: the concept ceases to be something transcendental and beyond the reach of the methods of practice, but is contained in the archive. The archive also holds an answer to the identity of a multimedia artwork. Yet rather than guarding a homogenous continuum of sameness, the archive maintains the identity of multimedia artworks through the persistence of change that follows according to the mereological theory of identity or spatio-temporal continuity of objects, to name but a few. The limits of changeability of these artworks, as well as whatever is specified or prescribed by documents in the archive, just as the applicability of the theories of persistence of identity that pertain to the acceptability of sameness or diversity of a changeable artwork, is equally dependent on judgement. In its judgements, the conservation of multimedia works makes use of Aristotelian phronesis – a rational consideration related to the specificity of a situation that results in palpable effects, rather than a top-down application of rules. This type of rational and practical knowledge, but also analogy with similar cases, becomes applicable where it is impossible to refer to old scenarios and principles, and traditional conservation ethics. In the conservation of multimedia installations, and with possible implications for conservation in general, the conservator's role is that of maintaining the work's identity through the interpretation and actualisation of the archive according to the set of rules and values characteristic to the ruling conventions and culture of conservation. In a Foucauldian sense, these conventions and culture sets limits on what can be said or made. The process of interpretation and actualisation, as I have argued, is of a creative nature. The conservation of multimedia installations is, henceforth, no longer

the return to a past 'original state,' or an occupation with the distant past, but rather, in its emancipated form, an active and creative 'presencing' of artworks; it is the creation of the archive that will guide future iterations.

Furthermore, because changeability shifts the discourse to the dimension of time and the material of multimedia artworks is, as I argued, temporalised, we may agree that the archive that is temporal and that 'contains' time manifest in changeability allows us to conceive of a certain kind of *temporal materiality*. This leads to the result that the archive may be regarded as a *source* of the materiality of the media. In other words, the changeability recorded in the archive is a foundation of a medium's temporal materiality.

The archive from which artworks are actualised has one further consequence. It is no longer the artist that exclusively shapes the identity of an artwork, but rather the archive on the basis of which decisions are made. The *archival turn*, I suggest, relativises the weight of intentionality of the artist, making space for the creative aspect of actualisation and the involvement of the others (conservators, curators and technicians). So both the artwork and its archive become realms of *social investment.*

Yet there is still a question that ought to be posed regarding the limitations of the archive. Is there a moment when the archive ceases to be a realm of the artwork's actualisation and when the work becomes something different? On the simplest level, such a situation could be conceivable in the rare case of a complete detachment from its origins, theoretically feasible somewhere on the cultural and geographical peripheries out of reach of the radiation of the former archive ('dead objects' in ethnographic collections). Certainly, the destructibility of the archive or its loss (Derrida) would extinguish the physical sphere of the archive and expunge the information. The virtual archive, however – the tacit knowledge and memory – would still be present as long as the 'transmitters' – artists' former collaborators and assistants – are alive. Forgetfulness would in this case be formative for artworks' new identity. Of course this implies that the condition for actualisation of a work requires the accessibility of the archive. Whereas in the case of tacit knowledge and memory this relates to the sanctioning of information by those who 'know,' physical archives are often controlled posthumously by estates that exercise their power over them. The limitations of the archive may also depend on what is permitted to enter it and what is rejected.[130] This refers back to the aspect of accessibility and the constraints imposed by those in charge and the cultural and linguistic limitations.[131] There is one further aspect of the limits of the archive related to the question of the permission granted by conservation with regard to its actualisation. Dependent on cultural context and the time in which decisions are made, the physical archive may not hold enough information

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130   This can be dictated by political censorship, but also by the artist's choice (Tino Sehgal's prohibition of the archive).

131   The limitations of the archive may even depend on the (in)competence to read instructions or technical drawings (in terms of understanding 'technical language').

to classify an actualised object as a genuine instance of an artwork. This brings us back to the question of unconservability. In Western conservation culture as a rule, the virtual archive does not suffice to acknowledge a reconstruction as a legitimate instantiation of an artwork (which might not be the case with the reconstruction tradition of *Shinto* shrines) – this is precisely why exhibition objects and replicas raise discussions.[132] They go beyond the limits of conservability in that the quality (virtual or physical) and quantity of the available archival information fails to justify such a status.

What to do, then, with Paik's prophecy that 'in the future, the only artwork that survives will have no gravity at all'?[133] I believe that the solution lies in turning fate into chance and rethinking the value of the physical trace in relation to the open horizons of non-material preservation. In this slow transformation of conservation culture – compared with the fast transformation of media cultures – Paik's media have already began to instigate changes.

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132   For an assessment of aspects related to the permission of the recreation of an artwork, see Kerstin Luber and Barbara Sommermeyer, "Remaking Artworks: Realized Concept Versus Unique Artwork," in *Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks*, eds. Tatja Scholte and Glenn Wharton (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2012), 244.

133   *Preserving the Immaterial*. See section 2.2