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Ciprian Mureşan : Video Installation Research Exhibition

2020-2021 Contemporary Art Conservation Student Projects : 10-11 May 2021, BG 5, Amsterdam.

Snijders, E.; Jansen, E.; Stigter, S.

DOI

[10.21942/uva.14529345.v1](https://doi.org/10.21942/uva.14529345.v1)

Publication date

2021

Document Version

Final published version

License

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[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Snijders, E., Jansen, E., & Stigter, S. (Eds.) (2021). *Ciprian Mureşan : Video Installation Research Exhibition: 2020-2021 Contemporary Art Conservation Student Projects : 10-11 May 2021, BG 5, Amsterdam*. University of Amsterdam, Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage. <https://doi.org/10.21942/uva.14529345.v1>

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UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

Conservation and Restoration
of Cultural Heritage

Choose (2005)



2020-2021

Contemporary Art Conservation Student Projects

Ciprian Mureșan

Video Installation Research Exhibition

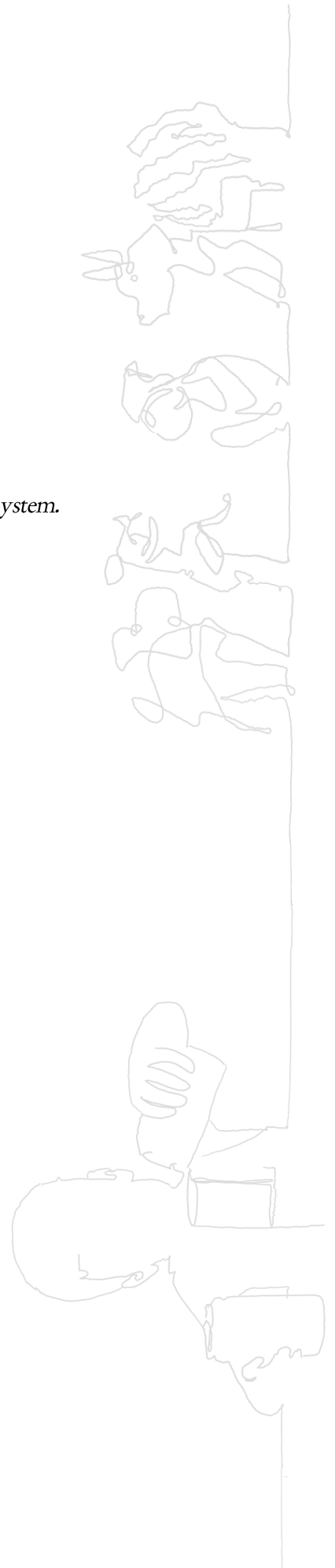
10-11 May 2021 • BG 5 • Amsterdam

We are 

Dog Luv (2009)



I don't think art making needs to be static; it's not a closed system.
– Ciprian Mureşan



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Foreword

This publication contains the work of our second year master students Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) in the specialisation Contemporary Art in the academic year 2020-2021: an installation art project description, a selection of student papers and thesis abstracts. It has become a continued tradition to celebrate the results of the Contemporary Art students at the UvA to disseminate their work to a wider audience. Previously we have been organising exhibitions and presentations in collaboration with NIMk at the Heritage Lab of UvA Special Collections in 2012, with LIMA at their Sustainability Lab in Amsterdam in 2013 and 2014, and with the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE) at Kunsthal Kade in Amersfoort in 2013 and at Museum Het Schip in Amsterdam in 2021. The previous two bi-yearly classes of 2015 and 2017 have presented their research and treatment results during the *Contemporary Art Conservation Student Symposium 2019: Re: New Media Art*. This year, the result of the treated artworks, from a travelling exhibition called *Grenzeloze Inhoud/Limitless Content* (1983), by the class of 2019 has been presented in an online exhibition opening, which will be further celebrated with a symposium in collaboration with RCE at SPUI25 on 1 September 2021. Because of the pandemic, there has been little chance to reach out in person, but these events show that the tradition of dissemination continues, including this small publication on the occasion of *Ciprian Mureşan Video Installation Research Exhibition*, for which we first and foremost thank our students as well as the artist for being so generous to share his work and insight for an experimental research setup. In addition, I thank Corina Bucea from Cluj Cultural Centre for introducing us for STUDIOTOPIA's Residency Programme, co-funded by the EU Creative Europe Programme. Last but not least, I thank my colleagues Ellen Jansen and Evelyne Snijders for their everlasting enthusiasm and perseverance in making this all happen in these challenging times.

The installation project and the collected papers are part of the New Media Art module. This module provides the basis for a complete learning line that could be followed as part of the Contemporary Art conservation track, similar to the focus on Plastics in the first year, and can be concluded with specialist work placements matching the student's interest. In our programme, we are closely collaborating with artists, Dutch museums and institutions with contemporary art collections to create an enriching learning environment where education, research and practice come together through the actual treatment of artworks in a professional setting. We thank our valued colleagues at the Dutch Cultural Heritage Agency (RCE), Video Projects, VideoArtlab and LIMA, in addition to our guest teachers (see Colophon) for their continued collaboration. For inspiration and support, we thank our colleagues at Tate, Bern University of the Arts, New York University, Museum of Modern Art and Bek & Frohnert LLC in New York, whom have been particularly supportive in supervising some of our trainee conservators over the past years. It is truly inspiring to see our students engage with professionals while embarking on complex conservation projects, conducting research and achieving wonderful results. With this publication, we want to support their work and share their contributions with a rapidly developing field of expertise.

Dr. Sanneke Stigter

Assistant Professor Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage
Contemporary Art

Installation Project

The practice of painting to visualise information has been around for thousands of years. Initially serving an utilitarian function, paintings have slowly converted to a artistic medium praised for the ability to appeal to our sense of aesthetic. And when we enjoy paintings on display in a gallery or museum we see colour schemes, compositions and surface textures, but in fact we are looking at the distribution of pigments dispersed in a medium across a specific support base, an canvas or panel. In this day and age when we enter a contemporary art museum we most likely find luminous colours and moving images rather than stills in paint. We see time-based media artworks, more specifically screen-based artworks, displayed via video projections or presented on cathode ray tubes (CRT) and flat-panels, even mobile display devices or flexible displays as contemporary canvasses in landscape and portrait mode.

Over the past ten years, the vast majority of time-based media artworks acquired in the most prominent Dutch museums have been single or multi-channel video artworks. The acquisition is often restricted to the purchase of the video signal and not the corresponding equipment or hardware. This strategy is not new and has been the course of events since the emergence of time-based media art in museum collections. Generic equipment is used to exhibit these video works for which the need of specific or dedicated equipment may not be so obvious at first glance. This could be a pool of equipment owned by the museum, or the use or rental equipment during exhibition of the artworks. Generic display devices are constantly in flux as technology evolves, and it raises the question of how these different display technologies affect characteristics of an artwork. What are the picture elements that make up the images depicted on these display technologies, and how do they influence the image properties and aesthetics?

Screen-based artworks are most often displayed on a direct-view monitor or as front-projection video projection on a wall or projection screen. This is referred to as the screen practice of an artwork and is often specified by or with the artist, whether or not through detailed installation instructions and assignment of equipment specificity. However, this is not always the case and even if clear instructions do exist, changeability is to be considered inherent to the reality of time-based media artworks. In order to investigate the effect of display equipment on a screen-based artwork, a small exhibition was created by master students of contemporary art conservation with a number of artworks by Ciprian Mureşan (1977). Two single channel artworks were set up with different screen practices; monitor versus projection and mobile equipment versus monitor, more specifically flat screen and CRT monitor. By setting up the works, the students experience the aspects and materials that can be involved in the installation of seemingly 'simple' single channel video artwork. In addition, they acquaint themselves with the different aesthetic qualities of display equipment and the possible effect on the artwork.

Evelyne Snijders & Ellen Jansen

Lecturers Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage

Contemporary Art

Artist & Artworks

Introducing the Artist: Ciprian Mureșan

Ciprian Muresan (1977) is an artist from Dej, Romania. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts and the University of Art and Design at Cluj, Romania – and he still lives and works there.



Ever since he graduated from the academy and university in the beginning of the 2000s, his works have been exhibited in solo exhibitions and collaborative exhibitions all over the world. You may have seen his works during the Biennale in Venice, or the Biennale in Sydney or during shows in museums such as Centre Pompidou in Paris or Tate Modern, London. His work features in major public and private collections, for instance the Ludwig Museum in Budapest, The MOCA Grand Avenue in Los Angeles, Palais Populaire in Berlin or the Tate in London.

Muresan is known to work with a variety of materials – he for instance makes drawings on paper, works with plastics, with wood, photography, metal, glass, clay, wax and maybe most famously video.

Introducing the Artwork: *Choose* (2005)

Choose (2005) is a 45-second video looped on a single monitor. The video shows Vlad Muresan, the artist's son, sitting behind a table with an empty glass in front of him, in which he mixes Coca-Cola and Pepsi and drinks it. As if to say that the two brand names, in fact, taste the same. During the artist's own childhood, these Western consumer brands were forbidden in communist Romania. With this context, this artwork seems to use the soda brands as an analogy to mock political parties that market different ideologies and yet produce the same results. As commented by the artist in an interview with Emily Nathan for Artnet in 2011:



Video still of the artwork

"This idea was generated from a conversation I had with my son. We decided that Pepsi and Coca-Cola have the same taste and are almost the same product, yet they are very distinct images. They are engaged in a sort of promotional advertising war, and yet they are basically identical. We joked about what sort of product we would get if we were to mix together two things that are both the same and different. Pepsi has a place in Romania's Communist past, you know; somehow, the soda managed to enter into the country before the Revolution, and it had a small market. I don't know how it got in, since we were not supposed to have any contact at all with Western values and products.

[...] And it was all about hidden channels. In Romania, we were isolated from the other countries in the Eastern Bloc; it wasn't easy to travel to the USSR or East Germany, for example. The regime had given all of us the same system, but in Romania we didn't know much about the Czech or Polish methods for dealing with those shared limitations. We were isolated both from the West – "the enemy" – and also from our neighbors, who were ruled from behind the

same Iron Curtain. Although the alienation was packaged differently, it was ultimately the same. Maybe Choose reflects that."

Introducing the Artwork: *Dog Luv* (2009)

"Dog luv" (2009) is a video artwork made by Romanian artist Ciprian Mureşan. The video is 30:32 minutes in duration with its native aspect ratio being 16:9. It depicts a series of scenes where five dog puppets, members of the "Republic of Dogmachina", explore human psychology and its love of cruelty and torture throughout history. The leader of the pack, Maddog, presents himself as their teacher but before too long, his disciples turn from theory to practice with him as their target. Main themes the video touches upon are the relationship between humans and animals, master and student, the have and have-nots of power, conspiracy and betrayal, and of course death. The predominantly black setting and dialogue augment the dark progression of the storyline and dialogues. The language spoken by the puppets is Romanian with English subtitles on the bottom of the screen. The dialogues have been based on a text by Romanian playwright Saviana Stanescu.



Figure. 1 'Dog Luv' projected at Plan B, Berlin, 2009 (left) and the Renaissance Society, Chicago, 2010 (right)

From previous installations it can be said that the specifications of its surroundings may vary but it is not chosen arbitrarily; in the exhibitions of PLAN B gallery (Berlin, 2009) and the The Renaissance Society (Chicago, 2010), the work was exhibited against a black wall, with the two walls next to it also in black (figure 1). However, whereas in PLAN B the work was contrasted with the two predominantly in white tones artworks that were in the same room, in the Renaissance Society, there was a black room with chairs dedicated solely to the artwork. This latter setup appears to be the most effective in achieving engagement with and understanding of the artwork whose duration is relatively long for the regular visitor. In both cases, the work was projected onto a panel of approximately 180x100 cm in size and dark in colour, with 2.1 speakers mounted onto the wall under the panel.

Student papers

Collaboration and Knowledge-sharing in the Face of Obsolescence

Marie Ducimetière

Master Programme Year 2 First Semester

ABSTRACT

The equipment used for the exhibition and maintenance of times-based media works is prone to obsolescence. Time has a sometimes-irreversible effect on the works, giving them an ephemeral dimension. The modification of works in the context of their maintenance brings changes to their identity. Staying faithful to it becomes increasingly challenging for conservators which develops new conservation strategies to adapt to each situation.

KEYWORDS: Obsolescence, time-based media, installation, Bill Spinhoven, conservation strategies, identity.

Conservators nowadays must face a new evidence: traditional methods of conservation cannot be fully applied to the preservation of born-digital artworks. These theories of conservation focused on material objects, aesthetics and original condition. These are part of what Salvador Muñoz-Viñas refers to as "classical theories of conservation" and exclude concepts like immateriality, artist's intention or obsolescence.¹ The evolution of the profession allows us to gradually become aware of the problems linked to this classical vision of conservation. However, there is too great a discrepancy between the development of new conservation strategies and the rapid obsolescence of the materials (hardware/software/operating systems) making up the works. How can conservation professionals deal with rapid technological shift and its impact on the preservation of media art? This paper presents the importance of collaboration between professionals in our approach to the obsolescence of electronic equipment in works of art.

With the arrival of the minimalist movement in the 1960s, the definition of the term "installation" when referring to art became increasingly blurred. Indeed, this term first considered neutral, was preferred by artists to the term "environment".² Attention was then paid to both the work and the space devoted to it, in order to enhance it. The viewer's response to the changing arrangement of a space increases the artists' interest in it and will later lead the artists to create works of art site-specific.³ The individual and

his body thus become objects of observation and experimentation, with the spectator feeling strongly his place and visiting activity within routes that seek to combat the omniscient point of view that characterizes classical art.⁴ All the senses can then be solicited (even if taste and smell are still largely ignored), thus helping to multiply the possibilities of interpretation for the spectator. In 1959, Roy Ascott's *Change Paintings* already required the participation of spectators, showing the increasing need in interactivity in the artistic world.⁵ At the same time,

¹ Salvador Muñoz Viñas, *Contemporary Theory of Conservation*, ed. Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann (Great Britain: Elsevier Ltd., 2005). p.91

² Claire Bishop, "But Is It Installation Art?," *Tate Etc.*, no. 3 (2005).

³ Alice Boccia Paterakis, Astra Price, and Hillary Kapan, "Walking the Walk and the Impact of Space and Place on New Media Art," *Studies in Conservation* 61, no. sup2 (2016).

⁴ Bénédicte Ramade, "Installation, Art.," (2020), <https://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/installation-art/>.

⁵ Marie Chatel, "New Media Precursor: Roy Ascott," <https://medium.com/digital-art-weekly/new-media-precursors-roy-ascott-fcc0e17219c1>.

interest in video technology is growing among artists, as it becomes more easily accessible inter alia through, for example, the introduction of the Sony Portapak video recorder.⁶ From this point on, technological and electrical elements have been more and more present in artworks. Like any new art form, it was important to be able to define it, in order to classify it. However, no common consensus has really been found and today different terms tend to define "media art": time-based media, born-digital, software-based, computer-based art... basically any artwork "that is dependent on technology and has a durational dimension".⁷

Based on this postulate, it is understood that media art can take on numerous form – from interactive installations to software, from virtual reality to locative media – and can also be experienced in various form of distribution. Conservators no longer deal with objects that can be "stabilized" in the classical sense, just by storing them in a controlled environment. Traditional notions of preservation are challenged, particularly due to rapid technological changes.

In our world of rapidly changing technological formats, there is no precise way of knowing how long hard- and software devices will remain functional. Keeping all the components functional is essential for the future exhibition of the works. A work cannot be considered complete if it is not exhibited, shown and shared with the world in its "authentic" and final form. Therefore, storage is not a satisfactory solution, especially since classic conservation methods such as cataloguing, location tracking, details of loan procedures, copyright arrangements, artist's interview and displaying instructions are often not effectively applied to time-based artworks' conservation by institutions.⁸ This, coupled with the rapid obsolescence of the hardware that makes up the works, creates a conflict when it comes to setting up a strategy to preserve them over the long term.

However, many institutions with time-based media collections have implemented ethical and logical conservation strategies to counter the effects of obsolescence as much as possible. The list of institutions (both private and public) as well as artists committed to the preservation in long term of media art is long and continues to grow.⁹ In recent years, research groups have been created, projects have been set up and more and more conferences on the subject are being developed.¹⁰ Large institutions capable of financing this type of project are slowly allocating more and more budgets to the development of new conservation strategies by encouraging collaboration between professionals. One reference nowadays is the The Variable Media Network (VMN) at Guggenheim Museum¹¹, who has developed four main approaches to preserving media art: storage or hardware preservation; emulation; migration; re-interpretation. Each of these approaches requires close collaboration with third parties, be they technicians, other conservators or the artist himself as well as the sharing of knowledge.¹² The construction of a broader methodological framework leading to decision-making models by important

⁶ Lisa Conte et al., "Overcoming Obsolescence: The Examination, Documentation, and Preservation of Nam June Paik's Tv Cello," *The Electronic Media Review* 2 (2013).

⁷ Tate, "Art Term. Time-Based Media.," <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/t/time-based-media>.

⁸ Asti Sherring, Carolyn Murphy, and Lisa Catt, "What Is the Object? Identifying and Describing Time-Based Artworks," *AICCM Bulletin* 39, no. 2 (2018).

⁹ Three examples that can be given are: *Video Data Bank* created in 1976, provides access to collections by ensuring the preservation of contemporary practice of video and media art; "*sooth side movie project*" founded in 2005 by Jacqueline Stewart defy institutional and boundaries by collecting, preserving, digitizing, researching and exhibiting immature films; "*black balloon archive*" by artist Liz Johnson Arthur preserve in her archive a lot of material and is committed to inspire people.

¹⁰ Symposiums inviting professionals to explore TBM preservation is impacted by technical and aesthetic decisions made during the process: *UNFOLDING: production and process in TBM* (symposium in Chicago) and *Symposium: It's About Time! Building a New Discipline: Time-based Media Art Conservation* by INCCA.

¹¹ Guggenheim Museum, "Variable Media Network," <https://www.variablemedia.net/e/index.html>

¹² Renée Van de Vall, "Painful Decisions: Philosophical Considerations on a Decision-Making," in *Modern Art: Who Cares?*, ed. Ijbrand Hummelen (Amsterdam: Institute for Cultural Heritage, 1999).

institutions such as VMN or the Tate should always make use of a praxeology of contemporary art preservation. Praxeology uses "reflection in action", a mental process that allows a professional to adapt to each situation in which he or she practices. However, to achieve the status of theory or science, praxeology in conservation-restoration must go beyond individual practice.¹³ In other words, the observation of the specificities of one or several contemporary works allows us to induce one concept (like "time-based media artworks" when a piece includes an electronic component) and this theorised concept then allows us, during the subsequent restoration of a different time-based media artwork, to rely on an experimental *acquis*. This brings us back to the importance of sharing knowledge and achievements. This sharing of knowledge takes place at various levels, but above all it involves documentation at all stages of the preservation of a work of art: even before its acquisition, until it is exhibited and then placed in storage.

For electronic media art, documentation should not only convey the significance properties of a work but also give an account of when the components become outmoded.¹⁴ The future vulnerability of a work can be more easily apprehended thanks to knowledge of its history and by cataloguing its components. Documentation then becomes a key element of risk management.¹⁵ Media artworks does evolve over time and will become obsolete. It is important to understand the characteristics or components that are critical either to the presentation (display or installation) or to the preservation of the artwork. According to Pip Laurenson, the obsolescence of technology takes two forms: one form generates the ongoing need to manage the migration of carriers and systems; the other directly threatens to damage the heart of some of the works.¹⁶ One is about managing the collection, the other is much more threatening and more difficult to manage as a conservator alone. The work's identity comes rapidly into question as external pressure, and decisions on *what can change*, and *what must remain* have to be made, while trying to stay faithful to the 'integrity' of the authentic artwork.¹⁷

Maintaining the fidelity and integrity of the artwork was the main goal of the preservation project around Bill Spinhoven's work: *I/Eye* (1993/2011). The work was first produced in 1992 and first exhibited in 1993. It was then re-installed in many venues. The installation is a computer-based interactive work which implies that each presentation of the work required specific material: a video monitor, a camera and a computer with the software. As a non-static object, the work is to be understood as a process that changes and transforms overtime. At each installation, curators irreparably noticed the damages and obsolescence of the equipment. A balance was to find for the re-installation, between "the formal technical principle of the software-based artwork and its core concept versus the functionality of its components".¹⁸

Within the framework of the preservation and future distribution of this work, Gaby Wijers, director at LIMA, and Bill Spinhoven have agreed to carry on an extensive research to ensure optimal preservation for the work.¹⁹

¹³ Muriel Verbeeck, "Penser Les Pratiques Après C.Brandi Vers Une Praxéologie Et Axiologie Des Restaurations En Art Contemporain.," in *Art d'aujourd'hui, patrimoine de demain, Actes du colloque SFIIC-INP* (Paris: SFIIC, 2009).

¹⁴ Conte et al., "Overcoming Obsolescence: The Examination, Documentation, and Preservation of Nam June Paik's *Tv Cello*."

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Pip Laurenson, "Time-Based Media Conservation - Recent Developments from an Evolving Field," <https://vimeo.com/14632365>.

¹⁷ Vivian. Van Saaze, *Installation Art and the Museum: Presentation and Conservation of Changing Artworks.*, ed. Amsterdam University Press (Amsterdam2013). p.48

¹⁸ Netherlands Media Art Institute, "Obsolete Equipment Research Project. *I/Eye* (1993/ 2011) Bill Spinhoven.," ed. *Obsolete Equipment Research Project Case Study Report* (2011).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*



Figure 1. *I/Eye*, 1993 © Bill Spinhoven / Netherlands Media Art Institute.

I/Eye's software is in BASIC V Assembler language which works on Acorn Archimedes computer.²⁰ The operating system of an Acorn Archimedes computer is RISC OS or RISK iX.²¹ Therefore, the software had been stored in a RISC PC 600. Concerning the hardware, some modules have been added which has consequently modified the original performance of the computer. After the modifications, the performances were enhanced, and the processing was faster. Modifying the hardware can be part of the conservation approach, but the "determination and oversight of acceptable degrees of short-, mid- and long-term change that an artwork may undergo in response to a changing context"²² is an essential part of the process. One of Spinhoven's idea on conservation is that it can only be achieved by allowing the installation to keep on changing through its life.²³ But were these modifications necessary for the preservation of the work or were they only an improvement? This detail is not expressly clear in the report. It should be one of the essential elements detail in the documentation. However, indications are given according to which version of the work is exhibited: the original version of 1993 should be displayed on a monitor and the colour version of 2005 can be displayed on a one tube monitor, multiple tube monitors, via a projection (2000 lumens ; 1024-786 resolution) or LCD screens. Based on these detailed indications, it is possible in the future to show the work to the public while remaining faithful to *I/Eye's* identity. The exhibition will then be possible through the collaboration between technicians, conservators, curators and even the artist himself. Everyone has an essential role to play for the future of the work, especially since none of the four editions is working properly and might need modifications in the future. The first version is damaged, the components of the second were split and used differently and the two last versions are not working due to obsolescence of their hardware. The only version that can be presented is the colour version of 2005.

The institution must know the strategy for successful preservation or working out what that strategy may be even before acquiring an artwork. The preservation decisions are based on a firm understanding of the work, its functionality and its context. Unfortunately, the media and equipment the artist uses always pushes the boundaries in terms of the technical knowledge for conservators and ethical understanding and requirements.²⁴ This is the case with the

²⁰ Acorn Archimedes computers were produced between 1987 and 1990.

²¹ Wikipedia, "Acorn Archimedes," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acorn_Archimedes.

²² Joanna Phillips, "Shifting Equipment Significance in Time-Based Media Art.," in *Electronic Media Group Session*, ed. AIC 36th Annual Meeting Ma (Milwaukee2010). p.141

²³ Institute, "Obsolete Equipment Research Project. *I/Eye* (1993/ 2011) Bill Spinhoven.."

²⁴ Patricia Falcão, "Things Change: Conservation and Display of Time-Based Media Art," <https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/projects/pericles/things-change-conservation-and-display-time-based-media-art>.

operating system of //Eye: working with RISC OS requires specific knowledge and qualifications. Artists use technologies of their time to create. These technologies are changing rapidly, much faster than the evolution of conservation strategies in the face of these new technologies. Even though some professionals are already thinking of alternative storing systems that will be available to us in the future (quantum computers or "DNA storage"²⁵) for the preservation of digital data, it does not solve the main problem: technologies are changing and young

curators do not have all the knowledge in hand to deal with them. For too long, the acquisition of technical skills for the preservation of works has been rare and little appreciated.²⁶ Most institutions hire external specialists like computer scientists to take care of repairing equipment. Many valuable people with the knowledge to restore or take care of hardware from the 1960s tend to retire or cease regular activity. The transfer of knowledge cannot only take place through books. In order to counteract as much as possible the consequences of obsolescence on TBM heritage, it is the duty of schools and institutions to transmit the necessary knowledge to the new generation and to continue to share this knowledge through symposium or research projects: in general, to allocate the necessary budget for the development of new conservation methods.

Works in new media are by their nature performative rather than constative, and this quality unhinged them from traditional approaches to both museum descriptive cataloguing and conservation strategies.²⁷ Nowadays, there is a growing interest on the part of conservators in the development of conservation strategies adapted to the heritage. This translates into a willingness to bring together professionals from different backgrounds so that everyone can share their knowledge and understand the issues at stake. Conservation of media art is an ongoing process. To manage media artworks in a balanced way, everyone needs to take an active approach in managing the changes inherent in the work, while maintaining its identity.²⁸ A detailed understanding of the evolving behaviour of these works allows the conservator to frame and adapt conservation strategies. Through a system of documentation and understanding of each part of the works, one can hope for better future preservation.

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²⁵ Dina Zielinski, "How We Can Store Digital Data in DNA," ed. TED (2019).

²⁶ Hanna Barbara Hölling, "Versions, Variations, and Variability: Ethical Considerations and Conservation Options for Computer-Based Art.," in *The Electronic Media Review*, ed. American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (Washington DC: Electronic Media Group (EMG), 2013). p.34

²⁷ Richard Rinehart and Jon Ippolito, *Re-Collection. Art, New Media, and Social Memory*, ed. The MIT Press (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2014).

²⁸ Phillips, "Shifting Equipment Significance in Time-Based Media Art."

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Robotic Art & the Variable Media Initiative Approach: a Suitable Conservation Methodology?

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Introduction

Time-based media art is an ambiguous term, covering a wide range of artworks of different materials, media and functions. It comes as no surprise that this renders it a difficult term to define, also due to the fact that the technology involved in the creation of the pieces is rapidly evolving.¹ This has not stopped conservators from coming up with methodologies to deal with this specific niche of artworks and prolong their lives in whatever manner or form suits them best. The Guggenheim was one of the pioneers with their Variable Media Initiative in 1998, and more followed suit.² The aim of the approach is to understand the work's behavioural characteristics and intrinsic effects, rather than a list of components and materials.³ The premise is that it provides a documentation tool that is medium-independent to extend the life of an artwork after the original technology has gone obsolete.

One of the more recent introductions to the field of contemporary art is the usage of robotics.⁴ It finds itself somewhere between traditional, "fixed" artworks that carry an emphasis on the material, and the immaterial, ephemeral performance art. An example of such a robotic art piece is *Can't Help Myself*, made by Sun Yuan and Peng Yu from 2016. It consists of a robotic arm that is sitting in a pool of red liquid and tries to prevent the liquid from seeping as much as possible. Witnessing this work is an experience: the frantic movements, the high-pitched noises that the arm brings forth and the never-ending effort to keep the liquid close evoke a feeling of panic and vulnerability. But the usage of the technology is also a central aspect of the work as it's inherently tied to its meaning.

This raises the question to what extent the medium-independent approach of the Variable Media Initiative that dates from the 2000's is suitable for such a modern, unprecedented format of art where the material seems such an integral part of the piece. This knowledge can result in a more well-informed choice on documentation and preservation strategies for robotics that are placed in the same grey area between matter and experience.

This topic will be discussed using the case study "Can't Help Myself". The term "time-based media art" will be further defined and how robotics are placed in this field. In addition, the work will be placed within the framework of the Variable Media Initiative approach to determine whether this method will cover all of its preservation needs.

¹ J.G. Hanhardt, "The Challenge of Variable Media", in: *The Variable Media Approach: Permanence Through Change*. New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2003. 7.

² "Preserving AI-Powered Art As Time-Based Media And Computer-Based Art", *Arts Management & Technology Laboratory*. Accessed December 9th 2020. URL: <https://amt-lab.org/blog/2020/5/preserving-ai-powered-art-as-time-based-media-and-computer-based-art>

³ "Organisation: Variable Media Network", *INCCA (International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art)*. Accessed December 5th 2020. URL: <https://www.incca.org/articles/organisation-variable-media-network>

⁴ O. Grau et. al., "Introduction", in: *Digital Art through the Looking Glass: New strategies for archiving, collecting and preserving Digital Humanities*. Donau: Donau-Universität, 2019. 11.

Definition of Time-Based Media Art

Pip Laurenson, head of Time-based Media Conservation at Tate, defines the term as follows:

*The term time-based media refers to works that incorporate a video, slide, film, audio or computer-based element. Time-based media installations involve a media element that is rendered within a defined space and in a way that has been specified by the artist.*⁵

At first glance, this appears to be a good all-compassing term for time-based media artworks. Robotic-based works fall under this definition decently. But at the risk of appearing pedantic, why draw the line at a video, slide, film, audio or computer based element? Why exclude performance art and (non-computer driven) kinetic works that are space and time-specific? Is an electric component essential for a proper conservation methodology? As robotics have a close affiliation with both performance and kinetic works, these questions are important to consider when choosing the right conservation paradigm. Like a kinetic works and performances, robotics move away from the focus on material and are more so intended to deliver an experience to the viewer that's akin to ephemerality. Reducing the artwork to its computer-based element might therefore produce complications upon determining the right conservation and documentation method, making it necessary to opt for one that is inclusive of artworks that are more ephemeral in nature.

The VMI Strategy

Around the change of the millennium, the awareness surrounding preservation of time-based media art began to spread. One of the first collaborations focussed on this topic was The Variable Media Initiative (which later spawned the Variable Media Network), developed by Jon Ippolito from the Guggenheim museum in New York. Although this initiative was founded while the time-based media art conservation was still in its infancy, its approach still appears to be applied to recent case studies.⁶ Their goal was to encourage creators to define their work independently from medium, so that the work can be translated once its current medium is obsolete.⁷ They drew comparisons between artworks and looked at certain behaviours or needs that two works might have in common, even if their mediums were completely different. For example, there is a comparison made between Meg Webster's *Stick Spiral* (1986) and Robert Morris' *Site* (1964). Webster's installation is a room filled with recently cut branches from a nearby area. In addition, the branches have to be cut for a different reason than the exhibition. *Site* is a performance where a male and female dancer interact with various props on stage. Both of these works are vastly different in format – an installation and a performance – but both require archiving instructions or score for the performances to be re-enacted at a later time. The VNM approach calls this a “shared behavior”.⁸

⁵ P. Laurenson. “Authenticity, Change and Loss in the Conservation of Time-Based Media Installations”, *Tate Papers*. 2006. Accessed December 5th 2020. URL: <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/06/authenticity-change-and-loss-conservation-of-time-based-media-installations>.

⁶ “The Gift that Keeps on Giving: Preserving New Media Art for Posterity”, *Journal of Conservation and Museum Studies*. 2015. Accessed on December 5th 2020. URL: <http://doi.org/10.5334/jcms.1021227>

⁷ “Definition”, *Variable Media Network*. Accessed December 5th 2020. URL: <https://www.variablemedia.net/e/welcome.html>

⁸ “Comparisons: Performed Works”, *Variable Media Network*. Accessed December 6th 2020. URL: <https://www.variablemedia.net/e/welcome.html>



Figure 1. Meg Webster's *Stick Spiral* (1986), installation view at the Guggenheim. Photo: Ellen Labenski.

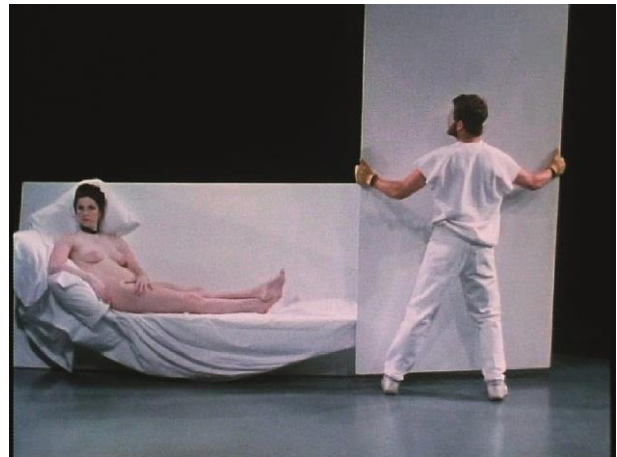


Figure 2. Robert Morris, *Site* (1964-1993), video still – Courtesy the artist and Sonnabend Collection Foundation, Babette Mangolte Cinematographer.

The rapid changes in technology often forces artworks to shapeshift. This means there's extra importance on understanding the essence of the work to allow it to maintain its authenticity. One of the tools that the VMN uses to achieve this is a questionnaire. It is meant to inspire artists to think about their artworks in different ways and to employ as a reference to base guidelines on. The questions presented are separated from the medium to gain a deeper understanding of the work to help with issues that may arise during future installations.⁹ The works will be described according to their behaviours, and only involve the material aspect when it provides relevant context. It seeks to find acceptable levels of change without compromising the essence of the work.

The VMN researches the following potential strategies and which questions they bring about:

- **Storage:** the attempt to preserve the material rather than the experience by looking at the storage.
- **Emulation:** a technique whereby you try to recreate the experience of the original as closely as possible, using completely different means. For example: vintage games that are re-performed in a software environment that mimics the original.
- **Migration:** bringing the work up to date. This may sometimes involve changes in appearance or behaviour based on new hardware or software.
- **Reinterpretation:** the spirit is re-created into a completely different medium, perhaps according to a score or other interpretive notation or instructions.¹⁰

Case study: *Can't Help Myself*

The installation "Can't Help Myself" by Sun Yuan and Peng Yu consists of a KUKA industrial robot with a long arm with a shovel at the end, situated in a room with acrylic walls. It sits amidst a pool of unspecified deep-red liquid that slowly seeps to the sides. Equipped with visual-recognition sensors, it keeps track of the flow of the liquid and brushes it back towards itself when it spreads too far, trying to contain the pool in a predetermined area. In the process, it swings around frantically, leaving splatters on the wall around it.

⁹ C. Jones, "Reality Check: A Year with Variable Media", *The Variable Media Approach: Permanence Through Change*. New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2003. 62.

¹⁰ "Introduction to the Variable Media Questionnaire", *Variable Media Network*. Accessed December 6th 2020. URL: http://tutorials.nmdprojects.net/use_vmq_1/help.html#



Figure 1. Sun Yuan and Peng Yu, *Can't Help Myself* (2016). Photo: Guggenheim Museum.

Symbolic background

To capture the essence of the work, it serves to look at the symbolism that hides in it. The Guggenheim describes it as a political metaphor, saying "the robot's endless, repetitive dance presents an absurd, Sisyphean view of contemporary issues surrounding migration and sovereignty", with the red liquid evoking the violence that comes with protecting borders and the robot representing the increased use of technology to monitor our environment.¹¹ It also raises the question of vulnerability: who is the most vulnerable party, the human who built the machine or the machine how is controlled by the human?

The artists themselves like to keep the symbolism of the piece unclear and let it be open to interpretation.¹² They do elaborate on the feeling of panic that the work may evoke.

"Only in the accidents of a computer glitch, a power failure or losing a cellphone can we realize that we are kidnapped by today's knowledge structure." (...) "The stronger such sense of dependence feels, the stronger the feelings of panic and pleasure it brings. The most frightening part is that no matter how we reflect on it, it cannot be stopped."¹³

Material background & documentation

In 2016, the Guggenheim published an extensive documentation report on the work. Amongst others, the following topics that were covered:

- A detailed list of all the components present. The inventory notes the number of the component, the TMS component name as well as an image for clarification.

¹¹ "Can't Help Myself", *Guggenheim Museum*. Accessed December 6th 2020. URL: <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/34812>

¹² J. Zhong et. al., "Identity Report: Computer-based Artwork", *Guggenheim*. Last update: 8/16/2017. <https://www.guggenheim.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/guggenheim-identity-report-cant-help-myself-sun-yuan-peng-yu.pdf>

¹³ J. Zhong, 2017.

- The replaceability of the main components. It specifies the components and where to find a potential substitute if it breaks (according to wishes of the artists).
- Instructions on how to prepare the installation and the liquid.
- Statements from the artists, such as original intention and a brief elaboration on the symbolic background.
- Extensive insight on how the robot functions and responds to its surroundings.
- Documentation of the behaviours of the robotic arm, such as gestures, speed and sound. For example, it defines what the names of the gestures are in English, Chinese and in the code.
- Installation parameters such as the room dimensions, the lighting and safety barriers.¹⁴

***Can't Help Myself* and the VMN method**

Reflection on the report

The report seems mostly focussed on documentation, but does not provide a lot of information regarding possible reinterpretation. Upon inspection of the section "replaceability of the components", it appears that the artists don't provide a lot of wiggle room. A lot of value is placed on the material aspect and keeping it in the same form. For example, if the KUKA robot arm is damaged, they instruct to contact the KUKA company for a replacement. This emphasis on material would make sense if the aim of the documentation is provide concrete instructions in case a component is faulty or if it's reinstalled, which it appears to be. It does not reflect on the artists' mindset regarding potentially switching the work into a different format when the technology is obsolete. However, this raises the question whether the artists simply have not given this topic much thought or if it's an answer in of itself, proving that they don't find this artwork to be fit for a different format.

Possible application of the VMN-approach

To get a better sense of how the work would fit into this approach, it would have been helpful if the artist had answered the following questions that are typical for this strategy:¹⁵

- Storage: what are the best conditions to store the original components, such as the KUKA robotic arm? What about the firmware: how to best preserve the programs it uses to be operated?
- Emulation: should the sounds that are produced by the movements of the arm be recorded and emulated in a possible future reinstallation? Can the work be reperformed on a different location using a different means, such as a VR-headset?
- Migration: in case that the robotic arm gives the work a dated appearance (for example, in a future when this type of technology is not used anymore), are the artists open to transferring the work onto a more contemporary format to keep the message relevant?
- Reinterpretation: when the technology becomes obsolete, what aspect should the re-creators of the work focus on more when looking for a substitute for the robotic arm: the ability to express vulnerable panic through its movements or the level of advancement of the technology?

It must be noted that the notion of emulation implies an "original" rendition of the piece. *Can't Help Myself* lies somewhere between a performance and a kinetic work and is slightly different each day it is exhibited, which makes it tricky to narrow down the original experience. For example, if the work would be visible through a VR-headset, what performance would be

¹⁴ J. Zhong et. al., "Identity Report: Computer-based Artwork", *Guggenheim*. Last update: 8/16/2017. <https://www.guggenheim.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/guggenheim-identity-report-cant-help-myself-sun-yuan-peng-yu.pdf>

¹⁵ These questions are based on the case studies given on the Variable Media Network website: "Case studies", *Variable Media Network*. Accessed December 5th 2020. URL: <https://www.variablemedia.net/e/welcome.html>

visible through the viewer? Which sounds are the ones that should be taken as a reference? Is the work equally authentic each day or are some performances more authentic than others? Since the work is so multi-faceted, it would be helpful to discuss these questions with the artists.

The other part of the approach includes a description of the behaviours of the artwork, which VMN describes as “medium-independent, mutually-compatible descriptions of each artwork”.¹⁶ To determine what the exact behaviours are, the artists will have to be consulted. However, one can speculate that the following behaviours can be ascribed to *Can't Help Myself*:

- Contained: when artwork requires some aspect of construction as intervention.
- Encoded: a part of the work is written in computer code.¹⁷
- Installed: when an artwork requires a set-up that is different from using a nail hammered in the wall or putting it on a pedestal, and is subjected to change each time it's installed.¹⁸

Furthermore, it appears that the panic, vulnerability and violence that are visible in the piece are essential to the experience.

Compatibility

It appears that the VMN strategy is very performance friendly in the sense that it does not fetishize the material aspect of the work, nor does it stress the protection of the original material at all cost, but rather sees it as a carrier. This does raise the question on how suitable it is for work as *Can't Help Myself*, where the obviously technological form seems to be inherently tied to the meaning of the work. The robotic arm represents vulnerability and how society hides behind a façade of technology both in daily life and politics. There needs to be a bigger importance placed on the material preservation as long as the technology has not gone obsolete yet. The VMN approach is a good way to ensure the survival of the artwork in the long run, but for the time being, the preservation of the current material is necessary to keep the message relevant – and to ensure that the artwork will make it that far to begin with. In other words, the issue is not due to the fact that the initiative dates from way before the birth of the normalization of robotics in art, but rather that it is not sufficient enough to encompass all of the aspects of the work.

Now, the existing documentation of *Can't Help Myself* covers the gap that the VMN strategy leaves quite nicely. The way it discusses replaceability, gives instructions on maintenance and discusses risk assessment – to name a few – provides enough information to ensure the preservation for the present and the short-term future.

But for other robotic works with a similar overlap between material dimension and ephemerality, the lack of focus on material might still pose a problem. Here too, the solution is to not use this methodology as a stand-alone resource to base a preservation plan on, but rather to supplement it with other databases or models that focus more on documenting the material and are more medium-dependent, such as the “Digital Workfile” model from DOCAM (Documentation and Conservation of the Media Arts Heritage).¹⁹ This project stresses on a meta-level the documentation of a wide range of documentation types to ensure a completeness of sources and gives recommendations on what to include. Examples are documentation from the artist themselves, documents on environmental parameters and keeping track of “lifecycle events”, such as past iterations and the possible changes in components. Attention is paid to the identification of the sources from these files, which include the artists, conservators, art critics and other stakeholders. This model provides a wide range of concrete information to supplement the VMN approach. Where the latter ensures a

¹⁶ J. Ippolito. “Accommodating the Unpredictable: The Variable Media Questionnaire”. *The Variable Media Approach: Permanence Through Change*. New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2003. 48.

¹⁷ B. Ogden. *The Variable Media Approach*. Oregon: University of Oregon, 2013. 5.

¹⁸ J. Ippolito, 2003. 48.

¹⁹ “DOCAM Documentation Model”, *DOCAM: Documentation and Conservation of the Media Arts Heritage*. Accessed December 12th 2020. URL: <https://www.docam.ca/en/documentation-model.html>

future for the work, the DOCAM model documents the past and the present, making this combination a well-rounded preservation tool for robotic artworks.

Conclusion

This paper explored the possibility of applying the Variable Media Network strategy to document a robotic work like *Can't Help Myself* by Sun Yuan and Peng Yu from 2016. This was done through taking a closer look at the methodology and the symbolic and material background of the artwork itself, as well as the existing documentation. Through placing the artwork in the frame of the VMN model, it appeared that the issue was not the fact that the VMN approach dates from the early 2000's and how it could not be prepared for the wide use of robotics in artworks in the modern day. Rather, employing an ephemeral and medium-independent strategy for an artwork of which the format seems inherent to its meaning – though it appeared to be a proper tool to possibly ensure a future in case the technology is absolute – didn't suffice when it comes to documenting and preserving the current materials. The solution is to supplement this approach with another documentation model that is more all-encompassing, like the Digital Workfile model from the DOCAM. When combined, these tools create an excellent extensive documentation source that covers the past, present and future of a robotic artwork.

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A Rose is a Rose is a Rose: Preserving Time-Based Media Installations

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Introduction

With rapidly advancing technology, time-based media artworks are in danger of obsolescence, and due to its ephemeral elements, the traditional conservation approach of viewing the artwork as a fixed form is questionable. Through a case study of Nam June Paik's *TV Garden*, this paper explores the identity of time-based media as a precursor to determining appropriate conservation methods.

What are Time-Based Media Installations?

Time-based media installations are artworks dependent on specific technologies, such as audio players, computers and/or software, to reveal the entirety of the artwork over a period of time.¹ As such, in addition to the height, length, and depth of the artwork, time-based media are defined by a durational dimension.² To give an example, part of the Guggenheim Museum's online description for Nam June Paik's *TV Garden* (1974) is "Color video, with sound, 29 min.;" browsing further down the catalogue page, the artwork is seen to be categorised under 'Film/Video' and 'Installation.'³ When speaking of time-based media, the term "installation" is almost always implied as the art form is often site-specific or becomes site-related when displayed, transforming exhibition spaces into tailored viewing environments for the audience's optimal experience.⁴ Time-based media can, therefore, be characterised to possess physical, temporal, and spatial or environmental elements.

Authenticity – The Paradox of Time-Based Media

The need for authenticity comes from musealization, institutionalisation and assigning a value to an original or unique artwork, however, the ephemeral nature and dynamic systems of time-based media do not allow for absolute identities.⁵ In seeking to define a time-based media artwork is to establish an undisputable level of integrity. The conclusions to this search would be nebulous for many, if not all, time-based media, since movement and sound cannot be frozen in time, and the rapid advancements in technology expose time-based media equipment to increasing obsolescence.

¹ "Time-Based Media Art Conservation," Conservation Program Specializations, The Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, accessed September 21, 2020, <https://ifa.nyu.edu/conservation/time-based-media.htm>; "Time-Based Media," Conservation Projects, The Guggenheim Museums and Foundation, accessed September 21, 2020, <https://www.guggenheim.org/conservation/time-based-media>; "Time-Based Media," Art Terms, Tate, accessed September 21, 2020, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/t/time-based-media>.

² Joanna Phillips, "What Is 'Time-Based Media'? A Q&A with Guggenheim Conservator Joanna Phillips," interview by Caitlin Dover, Blogs, The Guggenheim Museums and Foundation, March 4, 2014, <https://www.guggenheim.org/blogs/checklist/what-is-time-based-media-a-q-and-a-with-guggenheim-conservator-joanna-phillips>.

³ "Nam June Paik: TV Garden," Collection Online, The Guggenheim Museums and Foundation, accessed December 15, 2020, <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/9537>.

⁴ 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*, ed. Tatja Scholte and Glenn Wharton (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 73; "Environments," Art Terms, Tate, accessed December 10, 2020, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/e/environments>.

⁵ Pip Laurenson, "The Management of Display Equipment of Time-based Media Installations," *Tate Papers*, no. 3 (Spring 2005); Hanna Barbara Hölling, *Paik's Virtual Archive: Time, Change, and Materiality in Media Art* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 17-23.



Figure 2. Nam June Paik, *TV Garden* (1974). Installation view at The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Image Source: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation.

Every installation of a time-based media work is, in fact, a reproduction of the artwork and risks inconsistency to its first instance.⁶ As such, the use of “authenticity” in this paper is reframed to refer to the degree of which an artwork is as it is purported to be, rather than the originality or realness of the artwork.⁷ In the words of Castriota (2019), authenticity is “the degree to which the installation presented to audiences is regarded as an instance of the work, that is, the degree to which what we might call a *tokening link* is constituted between the experienced, sensed assemblage or event and the work-as-type.” (5)

The authenticity of a work is then subjective to each viewer and there is no guaranteed control over the occurrences of instances or even the perception of what is the type, but by documenting the artist’s ideas and locating the work-defining properties of the artwork, it is possible to influence the construction of authenticity.⁸ For many institutions, this is interpreted as creating faithful representations of the artwork, and to do so, conservators and curators have come to value artist interviews in determining the artist’s sanctions. Regrettably, artist interviews may not be enough to address all possible scenarios, and by involving the artist, there is a risk of changing or updating the artwork, adding to the list of potential

⁶ This is under the assumption that the artwork is first realised in the artist’s studio or other working space and to exhibit the artwork requires deinstalling it from the workspace and reassembling it in another location.

⁷ Brian Castriota, “Sustaining the Tokening Link: Authenticity and the Type-Token Distinction,” (paper presented at the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC) Symposium “Conservation and Philosophy: Intersections and Interactions,” November 26-27, 2020), 2.

⁸ Pip Laursen, “Authenticity, Change and Loss in the Conservation of Time-Based Media Installations,” in *Tate Papers*, no.6 (Autumn 2006): 9.

compromises.⁹ The authenticity of time-based media must then be discussed in two parts: (1) the authenticity of the work itself, and (2) the authenticity of the display.¹⁰

A Case Study of Nam June Paik's *TV Garden* (1974)

To make a time-based media artwork somewhat palpable, it is necessary to first identify its material manifestations, or work-defining properties, as well as its temporal and conceptual counterparts before an investigation of authenticity can take place. Using Nam June Paik's *TV Garden* (1974) as an example, the medium description by Guggenheim is as follows: "Color video, with sound, 29 min., with minimum of 30 television sets, and live plants."¹¹ The physical elements of this artwork would then be the displaying units and live plants, the temporal element is the moving image and sound from, and finally, the spatial or environmental element is the positioning and setup of the physical and temporal elements.

All the aforementioned components are required to materialise *TV Garden*, however, displaying units and video formats become obsolete over time, jeopardising the physical and temporal elements, and if the spatial or environmental elements are inconsistent, the viewing experience can be compromised. Understanding that all components are prone to variations, the artwork's aesthetic and physical integrity cannot be maintained, as such, the core of *TV Garden* as a type, resides in the comprehension of its concept, which is detailed in the artist's sanctions.¹² A discussion between Paik's studio assistant, Stephen Vitiello, and media arts curator, John Hanhardt (2003) reveals that "*TV Garden* is a conceptual work. [Paik] may never have written it down, but there is an implied score: play *Global Groove* with sound on multiple monitors in a room; monitors face up and surrounded by plants. And that is what's key. Beyond that, he would be fairly flexible. [...] When presented, viewers should understand that *TV Garden* was originally conceived of in 1974 and has a history of different ways of being presented." (76)

With moving images and/or sound, it is often unclear when time-based media is actualised. If a spectator were to walk past Nam June Paik's *TV Garden* without paying attention to the video component, has this person seen *TV Garden* or only a segment of it? When is it possible for an instance to occur? Reviewing the documentations of Harnhardt (2003) and Hölling (2017), Paik's sanctions for *TV Garden* can be summarised as below:

1. At least 30 TV sets playing *Global Groove*, surrounded by living plants
2. If the number of TV sets increases to 40 or more, a second channel must be added to play *Oriental Paintings*
3. TV sets and plants can be replaced
4. Make available the documentation or information of past exhibitions for viewers to understand the artwork's history of display formats.

There is no reference for how long the viewer should be exposed to the work, but by comprehending the *TV Garden's* past forms, the viewer is expected to understand that the materials present, rather than its presentation, are essential to the artwork's concept. There is also no guidance to the placement of the TV sets or plants; in fact, Paik urged exhibition

⁹ Barbara Sommermeyer, "Who's Right – the Artist or the Conservator?," in *Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks*, ed. Tatja Scholte and Glenn Wharton (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 145-146.

¹⁰ Sherri Irvin, "Authenticity, Misunderstanding, and Institutional Responsibility in Contemporary Art," *British Journal of Aesthetics* vol. 59, no. 3 (July 2019): 277, <https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayz007>.

¹¹ Guggenheim, "Nam June Paik: TV Garden."

The artwork was musealized in 2000 for *The Worlds of Nam June Paik* exhibition at the Guggenheim, who acquired the work the year after.

"The Worlds of Nam June Paik," Past Exhibitions, The Guggenheim Museums and Foundation, accessed December 17, 2020, <http://pastexhibitions.guggenheim.org/paik/index.html>.

¹² Hölling, *Paik's Virtual Archive*, 23-26.

installers to make their own judgment.¹³ Clues are given in the juxtaposition of organic life with man-made technology, the series of video images superimposed onto another, edited with flickers and flashes, which are then rudely interrupted by the next montage.¹⁴ In the end, the artist has not articulated the specific message or concept for the audience, but has written an enigmatic score for others to communicate his vision and ideas. As the musicians of his orchestra, exhibition installers assemble the artwork's manifestation by checking off each of the artist's sanctions. The actualising moment for *TV Garden* is then, when the viewer understands the exhibition history of the artwork and has witnessed the instructed physical manifestation. Consequently, the authenticity of *TV Garden* is dependent on the audience to link this actualised moment with what they conceive as Nam June Paik's *TV Garden* for it to be called an instance.

In examining its work-defining properties, *TV Garden* is recognised to hold both conceptual and material counterparts; through documentation of the artist's sanctions, an anchor in identifying the artwork as a type is constituted; and finally, by installing the artwork, a possibility for an instance to occur is presented. Having grounded the basis of authenticity from the artist's instructions and that the sanctions include providing the exhibition history of *TV Garden*, a large part of the artwork's identity is dependent on the amount and detail of documentation available from related archives.¹⁵ Interestingly, in addition to the Guggenheim Museum, *TV Garden* is simultaneously in the collections of Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf and the Nam June Paik Art Center in Yongin, meaning that there are at least three known institutional archives to investigate and share information.¹⁶ As an allographic work, the infinite variations of the artwork are integral to its identity; depending on the audience's prior knowledge of and exposure to the artwork from external media, their perception on *TV Garden* will have discrepancies. Bearing in mind that the audience involves all those who have experienced the artwork, the identity of *TV Garden* is connected to a wide system that is vulnerable to changes over time.¹⁷ Nam June Paik designed *TV Garden* to transcend time and technology through its flexibility in reproduction and interpretation, but this is not the case for all time-based media, especially autographic works, and should be reviewed case by case.

Conserving Time-Based Media

Traditional conservation approaches, hinging on material fixity, are not applicable to the conservation of time-based media. The changing identities of artworks contests to the code of ethics for conservation that stress conservators to employ reversible methods and maintain the "original" state of the object.¹⁸ As an example, though recently revised to accommodate contemporary issues, it is debatable on whether Step 1 of the decision-making model (2019) accounts for artworks created by living artists (see Figure 2). With artworks that are in-progress, it is uncertain when the artwork has left its infancy or is still being updated by the artist. Focusing on work-defining properties, it may be possible to move further down to Step 5, which is where documentation can seem endless due to the variability of time-based media.

¹³ John G. Hanhardt, "Nam June Paik, TV Garden," in *Permanence Through Change: The Variable Media Approach*, ed. Carey Ann Schaefer, Edward Weisberger, Yves Doucet, and Jacques Perron (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation; Montreal: The Daniel Langlois Foundation for Art, Science, and Technology, 2003): 75.

"Maximum decontrol," as Paik puts it, is the directive for the future of all his artworks, the replacement of physical components is so that his ideas may transcend time and technology.

¹⁴ *Global Groove* is a 1973 collaboration with John J. Godfrey. It is popularly interpreted to be Nam June Paik's anticipation of global channel surfing.

"Global Groove," Electronic Arts Intermix, accessed December 17, 2020, <https://www.eai.org/titles/global-groove>

¹⁵ Hölling, *Paik's Virtual Archive*, 146.

¹⁶ Hölling, *Paik's Virtual Archive*, 29, 31-32.

According to Hölling, Nam June Paik Art Center actually holds a "Letter of Authenticity" and a diagram of the plant and monitor distribution, which implies a shift of *TV Garden* from being an allographic work into that of an autographic one. However, without knowledge of the archival information available at the other two institutions, the author has chosen to withdraw from discussing this particular concern.

¹⁷ Castriota, "Sustaining the Tokening Link," 6.

¹⁸ "E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines (II): Code of Ethics," (Brussels: European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations, 2003): 2.

The identities of artworks are not singular; as *TV Garden* demonstrates, each iteration is highly variable and can lead to different ideas of the artwork's authenticity. This complexity has led a shift in the discussion of conservation from preserving an artwork as a specific idea, to archiving the many and evolving iterations that compose of an artwork's identity.¹⁹ Philips introduces a documentation model that allows some separation between an Identity Report and Iteration Reports, highlighting the need to document each iteration and making institutional choices transparent.²⁰ Documentation with an autoethnographic approach, which Philips provides, is necessary in compiling the nuances of time-based media art.

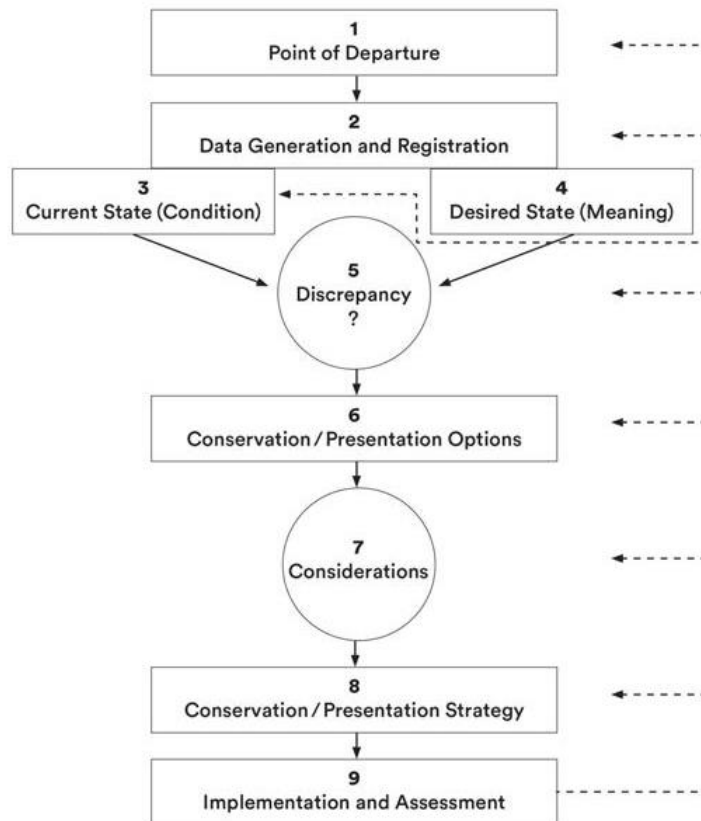


Figure 3 The Decision-Making Model for Contemporary Art Conservation and Presentation, 2019²¹

Documentation must also be made for the material equipment that the artwork manifests to safeguard part of its identity. With increasing obsolescence of both hardware and software, migration of artwork data is an important conservation approach to preserve file formats.²² In the event that *TV Garden's* CRT sets can no longer be used, and the stakeholders choose to replace them with modern monitors, the *Global Groove* video tape will have to be migrated

¹⁹ Brian Castriota, "Authenticity, Identity, and Essentialism: Reframing Conservation Practice." (paper presented at the ICOM-CC Symposium "What is the essence of conservation? Materials for a discussion," Kyoto, September 4, 2019), 41.

²⁰ Joanna Phillips, "Reporting Iterations: A Documentation Model for Time-Based Media Art," in *Performing Documentation in the Conservation of Contemporary Art*, ed. Lúcia Almeida Matos, Rita Macedo, and Gunnar Heydenreich, (Lisbon: Instituto de História da Arte, 2013), 174-177.

²¹ "The Decision-Making Model for Contemporary Art Conservation and Presentation," (Cologne: Cologne Institute of Conservation Sciences; Technische Hochschule Köln, October 2019).

²² Howard Besser, "Longevity of Electronic Art," February 2001, <http://besser.tsoa.nyu.edu/howard/Papers/elect-art-longevity.html>.

into a playable format. Depending on the desired aesthetics, emulation may be an employable approach to re-master and enhance certain flickers and effects that may have dulled over time.²³

Apart from reframing the essence of conservation for time-based media and contemporary artworks, ultimately, there are limitations that are the same across all artworks: cost. Each version that is created and saved will require space in the literal sense of needing real estate to place a server to store and manage digital data. For *TV Garden*, the potential replacement of tv sets will certainly add to the cost for both purchasing the new monitors and possibly double storage costs if the CRT sets were to be kept.

Conclusion

In the study of *TV Garden*, the identity and authenticity of time-based media is demonstrated to be multidimensional. When approaching these art forms for conservation, investigations must be carried out to locate all physical and conceptual components of the object, and in what circumstances is the concept actualised to allow for authenticity, so as to understand the implications in emulation or other treatment.

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²³ "Nam June Paik: TV Garden," The Variable Media Network, accessed December 15, 2020, https://variablemedia.net/f/introduction/case_paik_tvgar.html.

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Conservation Version 2.0; How Time-Based Media Installations are Forging the Postmodern Turn of the Profession

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Master Programme Year 2 First Semester

Introduction

The extent to which technology has shaped our society in the last century has been tremendous and unanticipated. Artists did not remain mere bystanders to this phenomenon, welcoming and embracing the new media available to them in order to fully express their creative endeavours. From mass-produced acrylic paints out of the tube, to photography, video and the internet, the introduction of modern technology has advanced, diversified and re-contextualised the ontology of the artistic expression. In the paper that follows, an attempt will be made to clarify what the term "Time-Based Media Installations" entails and to investigate what challenges these types of artworks bring about when trying to determine their identity and 'ideal' state. Several conundrums that conservators are faced with will be presented. Through this analysis of two case studies, this paper will demonstrate some of the ways TBM installations impact the conventional perception of art preservation and shape the role of the contemporary conservation profession.

Some definitions

By way of an introduction to the related terminology, it should be clarified that a clear consensus over what is the normative definition of Time-Based Media installations has yet to be reached. This complicates museum practices especially during database cataloguing (Sherring 2018). From a theoretical perspective, it is a heavily nuanced term because all art is time-based since it undergoes alterations through the passage of time. For all intents and purposes, a good start for describing Time-Based Media installations is: artworks that have a physical element but also place heavy emphasis on their durational aspect.

Let us begin with the durational aspect. According to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Time-Based Media Art (from now on TBMA) is an umbrella term used to characterise artworks that "include film, video, audio, or digital technologies that unfold to viewers over a period of time" (MET), whereas the Tate (TATE) and The Guggenheim (Guggenheim) add the category "slide", and enlist "computer art" as opposed to MET's "digital technologies". From this, it would be safe to say that any art that involves technology as a core element of its identity is time-based media. It could be also argued that ephemeral art, such as land or street art, as well as performance art could belong to this category. In fact, according to Pip Laurenson, "Time-based media installations exist on the ontological continuum somewhere between performance and sculpture" (Laurenson 2006). For the purposes of this paper, however, ephemeral art that does not contain technological media as well as the live performance of an artwork - not its subsequent video presentation - will not be further analysed.

The physical component, implied by the word installation, can be big or small; it can have a sculptural form, or it can simply be a line of code. Installations can be temporary or permanent; there are some that are site specific (Paterakis et al. 2016) and others could be totally lacking even medium specificity (SFMOMA). Certain categories such as kinetic art and light art can also be categorised as TBMA, but the media types most commonly described by this term are electronic devices (such as monitors, radios, computers) and digital software (3d printing files, computer art, net art, game art, social media, code). The Variable Media Network has used a categorisation that better reflects the behavioural aspects of these works; contained, installed, performed, interactive, reproduced, interchangeable, encoded, and

networked (Variable Media Network). While all TBMA installations could belong to one or more of these categories, the term variable media can be also used to describe artworks beyond the scope of this paper, such as photographic prints or contemporary paintings.

Conservation in the age of TBMA

As explained above, TBMA installations are heavily depended on the use of technology which has been evolving at an unprecedented pace. From the humble beginnings of the Dadaist's films, to the immensely influential artistic experiments of the Fluxus movement, and later the explosion of the internet; the increasingly technologized environment has been inscribing the evolution of the artistic expression. This fascinating and rich history of TBMA points to the fact that artists will not stop incorporating new media in their practice and keep on pushing the push the boundaries of technology.

As the variety of available means of creation widens, the long-term stability of these artworks has been challenged, particularly in the following ways; TBMA are often made of mass-produced material elements that have not been designed to last more than a few decades, with the embedded risk of technological obsolescence being a very urgent matter that requires great attention. Therefore, TBMA conservators and researchers are required to keep up with the fast pace of technology, while striving to enrich their problem-solving toolkit with new ways to tackle new issues that are often beyond their current knowledge and areas of expertise.

Contrary to their traditional counterparts, which are best stored in inert conditions, the less frequent TBMA are inspected for condition and upgraded, the more likely they are to be inaccessible or inoperable within a short time period. Indeed, even deciding to "do nothing" could have a great impact on the artwork's precarious longevity. It is for this reason that the conservators of TBM installations need to act *proactively* and document thoroughly, so that they can secure the artworks' survival and enable their exhibition, appearance, functionality and experience (Noordegraaf 2015, 121). What is more, the importance of the collaboration between different stakeholders in order to incorporate all the voices invested in the artwork's safeguarding is evident. In this setting conservators become, according to Sherring, "advanced decision makers" (Sherring 2018, 19).

TBMA installations have another interesting characteristic: they *exist* only in their installed form. This is the best moment for the assessment of their condition to take place. On the one hand, their iterative nature allows them to survive through the progress of their successful manifestations. At the same time, the artwork's evolution through time questions the well-established institutional notions of authenticity and originality. Maintaining the integrity of the artwork's identity within such change can be hard to evaluate. However, their very processual character is not necessarily rejecting but perhaps is redefining the idea of authenticity altogether. Talking about net art, Dekker said "with artworks that are networked and/or processual, authenticity can be identified in the relations between different components and/or artworks" (Dekker 2015, 131).

From all of the above, it can be said that a straightforward traditional approach for the preservation of TBMA installations is usually untenable. The manifold of ethical, technical and theoretical conundrums that these artworks bring about necessitate a casuistic approach (Wharton 2018), as well as a re-evaluation of the applicability of rigid traditional ethical frameworks in the case of TBMA conservation. Arguably, guidelines and principles offered by the VMN or the Matters in Media Art platforms are proven to be more suitable in accommodating solutions for these issues than the codes of ethics by (inter)national conservation institutes. In what follows, the case studies will illustrate the particularities of preserving TBMA installations and how different approaches on individual artworks can point to a shift in the conservator's role.

Case study #1: Untitled (Piano), 1993 – Nam June Paik

The first case study to be analysed is Nam June Paik's "Untitled" (Piano), 1993, which belongs to the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The work (fig.1) consists of an upright piano with a player piano unit, fifteen cathode ray tube (CRT) televisions, two security cameras, two laser disc players, one electric spotlight with a light bulb, and wires(MOMA). At the moment of acquisition, the piano was modified to operate automatically in a sequence dictated by a file stored in a floppy disc and placed under the piano's keys. The movement of the keys and the hammers is recorded live by two security cameras and the monitors are mounted on the top, the side and the floor next to the piano. The monitors broadcast four different video signals; the two live feeds from the cameras, and two video sequences created by the artist. These videos were initially stored on U-Matic cassettes but were migrated with the consent of the artist on Laserdiscs when the MoMA installed the work(Wharton 2013).

In 2013 when the 2-year-long conservation project started, the artwork was in a fragile state; alongside the required stabilisation of worn out piano parts, careful consideration of the appropriate conservation approach for the electronic parts was equally essential. Decisions were made after extensive research, interviews with Paik's estate and assistants, and collaboration with the curatorial department. Some of the piano's "signs of use" were deemed important enough to refrain from repairing, thereby respecting the historic value of the work. Furthermore, the use of materials in line with the conservation paradigm (hide glue instead of cyanoacrylate for the repair of the piano's hammers) strengthened the treatment's compatibility and reversibility. The limited lifespan of CRT monitors and light bulbs led to the museum's decision to stockpile bulbs and Samsung monitors, acting *proactively*. In accordance with this, the team documented every part of the installation process and even created an educational video for future caretakers of the work. (Wharton 2015)



Figure 1. "Untitled" (Piano), Nam June Paik (1993). Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, NYC. Image credits: MoMA

On the other hand, some more ethically ambiguous decisions had to be made regarding the updating of other parts. The floppy disc contents were migrated to an mp3 format and the original equipment remained on view, albeit on “off” mode. The contents of the video discs were also digitised in uncompressed files but the two Laserdisc playback devices were decided to remain in operation despite the impending obsolescence of their analogue format. The particular case of Nam June Paik’s idiosyncrasy further complicated the puzzling situation conservators and curators found themselves in. MoMA’s TBM conservator Glen Wharton explained:

“As we know, Nam June Paik used to change the technology of his work all the time and every time it was shown, he liked using new technology. Yet, he had complicated relations with the technology. He really liked CRT. [...] The larger question is: Do we freeze the technology at the moment the artist died? Or, in his spirit, keep changing the work in each time it is exhibited?” (Wharton 2015)

Indeed, the aesthetic impact that CRT monitors have on the way the artwork is presented is a valid reason behind the reluctance to update them and the decision to stockpile the monitors. In contrast, the issue of obsolescence was not tackled with similarly in either the case of the floppy disc or the Laserdisc. These conservation decisions reflect a significant reliance upon curatorial and exhibition goals that were set upon the artwork. This is to be expected in an institution where collaboration paves the path for the artwork’s trajectory, but also highlights asymmetries in intellectual authority (Wagenknecht 2016, 116). Overall, “Untitled”’s preservation strategy could be described as a middle-way approach between traditional and “new age” conservation. It also highlights the need for the conservator to be the link between different institutional departments, external collaborators, and the artist’s voice mediated through his estate.

Case study #2: Naked on Pluto, 2010-2013 – Marloes de Valk, Aymeric Mansoux, Dave Griffiths

Before delving into the second case-study, we will first take a look at the special characteristics of the category it belongs to. Net art developed in the mid-90s, expressed by “establishing links between documents and arbitrary nodes” on- and offline (Paul 2015, 111). Its core behavioural elements are interactivity, iterativity, and context-dependency. The iterativity gives rise to questions regarding its authenticity, important for conservators to determine the artwork’s condition and safeguard it for posterity. Authenticity in the context of net art is intrinsically linked to versioning, multiple authorship, and processuality (Dekker 2015). In order to pay respect to these characteristics, conservators dealing with the preservation of net artworks need to reconfigure the traditional object-focused, time-arresting perspective into one which accepts, stewards and enables change. Consequently, the conservator becomes a manager of the processuality of the artwork, documenting its evolution through time and brokering collaborations (Falcão and Ensom 2019, 14).

The artwork “Naked on Pluto” (fig. 2-4) was created by de Valk, Mansoux and Griffiths as an online game that engages users in utilising Facebook data, in an attempt to highlight issues regarding privacy policies and the invasion of social media platforms in our daily lives. This interactive work was originally produced in 2010-2011 but continued to develop through workshops and exhibitions long after its *game* form ceased to be functional (Barok et al. 2020). This was a result of a foreseen and expected (Dekker 2015, 128) change in Facebook’s API which occurred in 2013 and deemed the software part of the game “a relic” that can be neither operated nor restored (Barok et al. 2020). In order to document the artwork, the conservation team had to first identify what exactly had to be documented and the means through which this could be achieved. Documenting a non-medium-centric work that puts emphasis on its participatory aspect, encompasses elements of source code, interviews, essays and statements, with iterations non-restricted to installation instructions was a task far from easy to undertake.



Figure 2. Installation view of "Naked on Pluto" at ARCO Madrid in 2012. Image credits: Monoskop.



Figure 3. "Naked on Pluto" workshop at Eindhoven's Baltan Laboratories. Image credits: Monoskop.

Keeping in mind the nature of the artwork, which was characterised as "research-based", a preservation strategy which would concentrate on this aspect needed to be devised, encompassing its various manifestations on the virtual and natural space. Preservation in the case of such artworks is effectively the documentation of the artwork's material iteration alongside the presentation of its dynamic character. For this reason, the wiki-style publishing platform Monoskop was used which facilitated the organisation and management of the relevant documentation. Wiki-style according to Barok et al. means that "objects are not represented by forms but articles, whose templates may be adapted to suit particular needs of artworks, contributors may rearrange sections, change headings, and embed media files" (Barok et al. 2020). In this process, the conservator assumes the role of "content manager" (Barok et al. 2019, 473) confronted with challenges related to multiple authorship, and increasingly integrating curatorial and archival practices for the epistemic analysis as well as the safeguarding of the artwork's ontology.



Figure 4. "Naked on Pluto" game interface. Image credits: Monoskop.

Conservation Version 2.0

As described above, TBMA installations cannot be treated like 'traditional' conservation objects, for whom halting the progress of change is the established approach. They are "short-duration" artworks that *emerge* through their instantiations, every time they are installed. Given that they contain elements that are subjective to rapid material deterioration as well as technological obsolescence, acting *proactively* is essential in rescuing them from oblivion. What can be extracted from the "Untitled" (Piano) case is that conservators often act as curators and their clean-cut material-driven treatment decisions may clash with traditional approaches, giving rise to questions over authenticity. Their knowledge needs to keep evolving alongside the advancements in technological and scientific methods at their disposal, while external expertise and advice is highly sought after. "Naked on Pluto" highlights the role of the conservator not only as a co-producer of the artwork through its documentation, but also her position as a content manager in a pluralistic environment of co-authorship along with the audience. It also points to the urgency of looking outside of the conservation field (publishing) to find tools that suit their needs.

It is critical to emphasize the significant part that documentation plays in the process of ensuring the longevity of the artworks' legacy and enabling their possible futures. Both case studies demonstrated that keeping a clear record of every event in the object's biography, be it exhibitional or archival, appears to be the most reliable approach. Documentation also serves the function of filling in the narrative gaps left behind by the lack of material integrity. On this note, the institutional responsibility to facilitate the dissemination of such documentation to the public cannot be understated. In line with these efforts, the conservator becomes a translator of this progress of successful materialisations for the audience, acting as an advocate for the artwork to the outside world.

Conclusion

Contemporary art conservation is witnessing a paradigm shift. The image of the conservator as a loner always sitting behind a desk and hidden away from public view is changing into one that engages directly with the artist during the interview, fosters discussions between museum departments but also external stakeholders, and continually develops her skills to meet each artwork's needs for care. Thanks to the particular challenges posed by Time-Based Media Installations, the contemporary conservation thinking is developing from the inside by re-examining our relations with the object's *materiality*¹ rather than merely their material aspects. Conservators actively shape the historical narrative of the artworks through their archival contributions and contribute to the artwork's aesthetical appearance in subsequent realisations.

Complete reconfiguration of the traditional conservation paradigm is probably not going to happen anytime soon. In most cases it is the artworks themselves that not only guide the conservation treatments but also consolidate a new attitude in contemporary practices. But as these artworks do not stand alone in the stage of cultural heritage history, the conservators entrusted with their care are not alone in their mission to protect them. Contemporary art conservators dealing with TBMA installations belong to a wider network of collaborators from whom they can inform their practices, the same way it has been taking place in the exchange between the conservation of contemporary art and ethnographic collections (McHugh and Gunnison 2016). Following the scientific and social turn (Muñoz Viñas 2012, 34), TBMA installations are pushing conservators into re-evaluating not only the content but also the context of their activities, considering the social impact embedded within decisions over what should be conserved and for whom, and forging the postmodern turn of the profession.

¹ As described by Hanna Hölling, materiality is "a social and temporal construct framing the existence of artworks and artefacts across different temporal and spatial contexts. In the context of conservation, we speak of the non-material aspects of materiality as including the artwork's concept, temporality and spatiality." (Hölling 2017)

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Preserving Auto-Destruction: An Analysis of the Animatronic Artwork *Colored Sculpture* (2016) by Jordan Wolfson

Marieke Voogd

Master Programme Year 2 First Semester

Introduction

Conservators of contemporary art are constantly presented with new and complex conservation problems that require a highly individualized approach. Especially those artworks that have an ephemeral or conceptual nature and lack reasonable material stability. These contemporary problems require contemporary approaches shifting the conservator away from the preservation of material integrity towards extensive documentation, inter-disciplinary collaboration and ongoing education. An especially challenging category of contemporary artworks are the Time-Based Media Installations, which are often multifaceted and prone to obsolescence, deterioration and failing of components.

The challenges surrounding the preservation of Time-Based Media Installations will be examined in this essay through the means of a case study. *Colored Sculpture* (2016) by Jordan Wolfson is a moving, sculptural work decked out with many complex technological features. On top of that *Colored Sculpture* self-vandalizes when it is installed making the preservation and maintenance of the artwork even more challenging. In the first part of this essay the complexities surrounding the preservation of Time-Based Media Installations will be analyzed, followed by a detailed description of the workings of *Colored Sculpture*. In the last part of this essay the self-destructive element of the artwork will be discussed and thereafter the author will formulate an approach in dealing with these types of complex installations.

The preservation of Time-Based Media Installations

The term *Time-based Media Installations* has been defined most accurately by Pip Laurenson, Head of Collection Care Research at Tate, in the following quote:

"The term time-based media refers to works that incorporate a video, slide, film, audio or computer based element. Time-based media installations involve a media element that is rendered within a defined space and in a way that has been specified by the artist. Part of what it means to experience these works is to experience their unfolding over time according to the temporal logic of the medium as it is played back."¹ In her definition Laurenson makes a distinction between Time-based Media Art and Time-based Media Installations. Time-based Media Art is identified by the two following specifications:

- **Time-based:** the artwork has a durational dimension and unfolds to the viewer over time.
- **Media:** the artwork contains a technology-based media element, which is rendered into sound and picture by playback and display devices.

Time-based Media Installations are also characterized by the two specifications as mentioned above with the addition of the following:

- **Installation:** the artwork is rendered within a defined space, specified by the artist.

The preservation of Time-Based Media Installations is complex and differs greatly from the conservation of traditional art objects. Physical deterioration of material is not the only factor that threatens the existence of Time-Based Media Installations, technological obsolescence is a much quicker and more silent threat brought about by the rapidly evolving technological

¹ Pip Laurenson, "Authenticity, Change and Loss in the Conservation of Time-Based Media Installations", in *Tate Papers*, no.6, Autumn 2006, <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/06/authenticity-change-and-loss-conservation-of-time-based-media-installations>, accessed 3 December 2020.

environment. Artworks that contain a technology-based media element run the risk of hardware breaking down and no longer being manufactured or supported, or file formats becoming incompatible due to software updates.

The preservation of Time-Based Media Installations is complex and differs greatly from the conservation of traditional art objects. Physical deterioration of material is not the only factor that threatens the existence of Time-Based Media Installations, technological obsolescence is a much quicker and more silent threat brought about by the rapidly evolving technological environment. Artworks that contain a technology-based media element run the risk of hardware breaking down and no longer being manufactured or supported, or file formats becoming incompatible due to software updates. The other great challenge facing the preservation of Time-Based Media Installations is once again very aptly described by Pip Laurenson in her paper *Authenticity, Change and Loss in the Conservation of Time-Based Media Installations*. According to Laurenson the conservator's more traditional notions of authenticity, change and loss need to be adapted when dealing with Time-Based Media Installations. The prevalent notion of an object-centered definition of authenticity based on physical integrity, the artwork as a unique object and the presence of the traceable hand of the artist, are no longer valid in this instance.

Laurenson emphasizes that Time-based Media Artworks have a performative nature, the work must be experienced as an installed event and only exists in this state of being. Just like with musical work, Time-Based Media Installations are allographic, they are created in two separated stages. Firstly, they are composed by the artist and secondly they are performed or installed. Change and instability are inherent to performance and (re-)installation, yet change and instability are diametrically opposed to preservation. In order to preserve, maintain and exhibit Time-Based Media Installations the 'identity' of the work needs to be established. Instead of just focussing on preserving a desired material state, the identity of an artwork also includes intangible elements that are significant to an installation. The work defining properties of the installation in question need to be determined as well as the parameters of possible and acceptable change. Instructions by the artist are usually the starting point in defining these work defining properties.²



Figure 1: Jordan Wolfson, *Colored Sculpture*, 2016.
Photo: Gert Jan van Rooij.

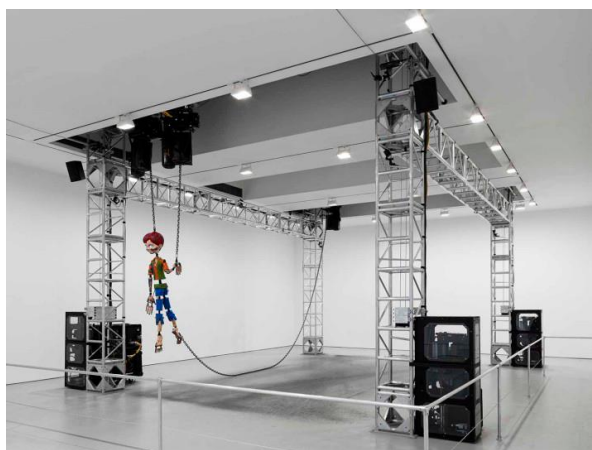


Figure 2: Jordan Wolfson, *Colored Sculpture*, 2016.
Photo: Jennifer Piejko

² Pip Laurenson, "Authenticity, Change and Loss in the Conservation of Time-Based Media Installations", in *Tate Papers*, no.6, Autumn 2006, <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/06/authenticity-change-and-loss-conservation-of-time-based-media-installations>, accessed 3 December 2020.

Colored Sculpture (2016) by Jordan Wolfson

A compelling example of the complexity of time-based media installations can be found in Jordan Wolfson's animatronic installation *Colored Sculpture* from 2016. An animatronic is a mechanical doll that imitates the movements of a human being. *Colored Sculpture* was developed as a collaboration between the artist, the David Zwirner gallery, roboteer Mark Setrakian and a L.A. based design-build company named Killstress.³ The installation has been presented on four different occasions. It was first shown at the David Zwirner gallery in New York between May 5 and June 25 of 2016⁴, thereafter it was shown from October 1 to 23 of 2016 at the LUMA foundation in Arles⁵, and that same year the installation was exhibited at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam from November 26 of 2016 to April 22 of 2017.⁶ *Colored Sculpture* was acquired by the Tate Modern in London in 2018 with funds from Irish art collectors Marie and Joe Donnelly and shown in the Tanks between May 3 and August 31 2018.⁷ The artwork is supposedly an edition of three, of which Tate's acquired copy is the second.⁸

Colored Sculpture's focal point is a 2 meter high sculptural figure of a cartoon-like, boyish puppet, resembling illustrations of Huck Finn, Howdy Doody and the MAD magazine character Alfred E. Neuman.⁹ The puppet is made of 19 separate body parts made of glossy, intrinsically colored polyurethane elastomer, an industrial material that is highly resilient to impact. The separate body parts are connected to each other with short chains, the head, the torso, two upper arms, two lower arms, two hands, two sets of fingers, the pelvis, two upper legs, two lower legs, two feet and two sets of toes. The sculptural puppet is attached to three much longer chains, one linked to the top of its head, one linked to its left hand and one linked to its left foot.¹⁰

The longer chains are connected to three motors, the type of motors that are normally used for boat anchors.¹¹ These motors are able to run along two tracks at the front and back of a square framework that is mounted to the ceiling. The head and hand chains are connected to the two motors at the front of the framework, the foot chain is connected to the motor at the back of the framework. Apart from the motors being able to move from side-to-side along the tracks of the framework, they are also capable of winching up and lowering and of releasing the chains. The square framework, made of scaffold-like metal tube material, is held up with four columns at each of its corners. The whole framework is hereby demarcating a cubic space.

The three motors that are attached to the long chains on the puppet are thus able to move the puppet around the cubic space demarcated by the metal framework. When the installation is operating, a tightly specified, 12 minute long choreography unfolds. During this cycle the figure is moved through the cubic space at varying levels of speed, e.g. the puppet is

³ Patricia Falcao, "Case Study (2016), by Jordan Wolfson," in Transformation Digital Art LiMA, Amsterdam, June 9 2020, <https://www.li-ma.nl/lima/sites/default/files/Case%20Study%20-%20Colored%20Sculpture%20%282016%29%20by%20Jordan%20Wolfson.pdf>.

⁴ David Zwirner, "Jordan Wolfson Press Release", accessed on 8 December 2020, <https://www.davidzwirner.com/exhibitions/jordan-wolfson-0/press-release>.

⁵ LUMA Arles, "Jordan Wolfson - Colored Sculpture", accessed on 8 December 2020, <https://www.luma-arles.org/en/luma/events?eid=f4877dc4-ad57-4576-acd7-d8877616fe00>.

⁶ Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, "Jordan Wolfson Manic/Love/Truth/Love", accessed on 8 December, <https://www.stedelijk.nl/nl/tentoonstellingen/jordan-wolfson>.

⁷ Stuart Jeffries, "Interview - Jordan Wolfson: "This is real abuse - not a simulation," *The Guardian*, May 3, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/may/03/jordan-wolfson-puppet-violence-colored-sculpture-tate-modern>.

⁸ Tate, "Jordan Wolfson - Colored Sculpture (2016)", accessed on 8 December 2020, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/wolfson-colored-sculpture-t15218>.

⁹ Patricia Falcao, "Case Study (2016), by Jordan Wolfson," <https://www.li-ma.nl/lima/sites/default/files/Case%20Study%20-%20Colored%20Sculpture%20%282016%29%20by%20Jordan%20Wolfson.pdf>.

¹⁰ Tate, "Jordan Wolfson - Colored Sculpture (2016)", accessed on 8 December 2020, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/wolfson-colored-sculpture-t15218>.

¹¹ Patricia Falcao, "Case Study (2016), by Jordan Wolfson," <https://www.li-ma.nl/lima/sites/default/files/Case%20Study%20-%20Colored%20Sculpture%20%282016%29%20by%20Jordan%20Wolfson.pdf>.

hoisted up, smashed on the floor, swung across the space and suspended in mid-air. At times the long chains are released by the motors and cascaded violently across the floor, crashing into the puppet attached to them along their way down. All this abuse does take its toll, the work's self-destructive nature causes the glossy, colored layer on the puppet to scuff. The puppet gradually loses its bright colors the longer it performs revealing the matte grey material underneath. The chains and figure also leave black scuff marks all over the floor of the stage, delineating the movement of the kinetic sculpture over time.

The puppet's eyes are made of two custom-made screens. The screens display an animation of two eyes that blink occasionally. The head is equipped with interactive, facial recognition technology. The eyes are able to track and follow around twenty people at once in the space of the installation. The tracking eye animation is sometimes interrupted by different types of animations within the cycle of the choreography. The eyes will for example be closed for a duration of time, a bouncing chocolate bonbon with spiraled icing can be seen on the screens, a smiling mouth and white letters spelling the words SPIT EARTH, among many other animations.

Sound is also an integral part of the identity of *Colored Sculpture*. First of all the deafening and echoing sounds produced by the violent slamming and dragging of the puppet across the floor, the sounds of metal ratcheting like the build up of a rollercoaster and the cascading sound of the chains suddenly being released. Secondly, snippets of "When a Man Loves a Woman" by Percy Sledge are blasted through loudspeakers attached to the metal framework only to be abruptly cut off to silence. Lastly, the moment in the installations choreography when the following screen eyes of the puppet are closed and a sequence of animations starts on the screens, a recording of the artists voice can be heard reading a text that lasts around 57 seconds, counting from 2 to 18 and describing the things he will do to the addressee.^{12 13}

At Transformation Digital Art LiMA (Amsterdam) on Jun 9th 2020 time-based media conservator Patricia Falcao presented a workshop 'On documenting *Colored Sculpture* (2016)' where she showed the following diagram (figure 3) to further illustrate the complexities of the different technologies involved in the workings of *Colored Sculpture*. The L.A. based production company Killstress worked together with different specialists in order to create a functioning artwork.

¹² "Two to kill you, three to hold you, four to bleed you, five to touch you, six to move you, seven to ice you, eight to put my teeth in you, nine to put my hand on you, ten to hand inside your hair, eleven your leg over my shoulder, twelve your mouth full of coffee, twelve I knew you, thirteen I killed you, fourteen you're blind, fifteen you're spoiled, sixteen to lift you, seventeen to show you, eighteen to weigh you." Pause. "Spit. Earth."

¹³ Tate, "Jordan Wolfson - Colored Sculpture (2016)", accessed on 8 December 2020, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/works/wolfson-colored-sculpture-t15218>.

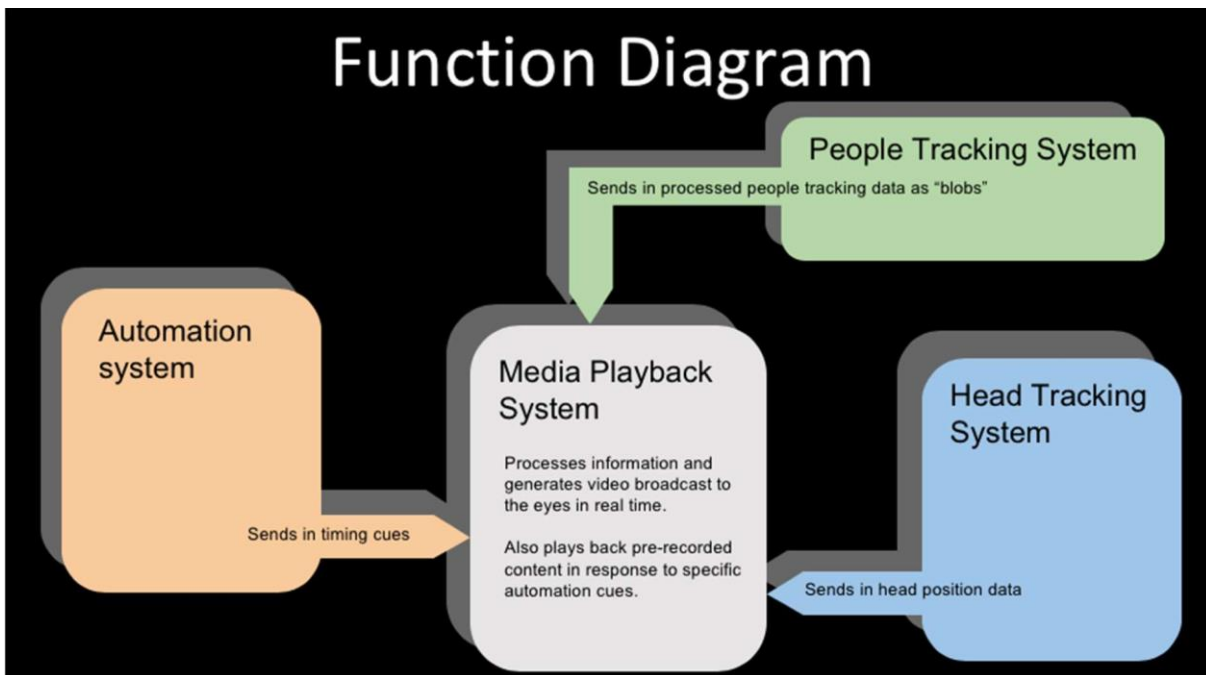


Figure 3: Diagram by Chris King, time-based media conservator at Tate, illustrating the high level functions of the different parts of the system.

The element of auto-destruction

The complexity of *Colored Sculpture* mainly resides in the fact that it has so many different work-defining properties that are crucial to the identity of the artwork and dependent on the functionality of different types of technologies. However, one of those work-defining properties endangers the functioning of the others. A crucial element to the identity of *Colored Sculpture* is its self-destructive nature. Once installed, the colourful puppet is dragged across and dropped on the floor of the exhibition space violently every day for months on end. The bright, glossy colours on the polyurethane elastomer sculpture abrade and a scuffed pattern marks the exhibition floor, tracing the puppets choreography. The difference between *Colored Sculpture* at the beginning of installation and towards the end of its installation at the David Zwirner Gallery can be seen in figure 4 and 5.

The artistic tradition of auto-destructive art goes back to the 1960s, with the famous example of Jean Tinguely's *Homage To New York* (1960), a huge mechanical sculpture which destroyed itself during its 27 minute long performance in the garden of the Museum of Modern Arts.¹⁴ *Colored Sculpture*, although violent and self-vandalizing, is not meant to completely destroy itself like *Homage to New York*. The artwork is to remain functioning and continue its performance.

The massive impact of the performance does however cause a lot of technical difficulties preventing the artwork from functioning correctly and requiring a great deal of maintenance (figure 6).¹⁵ Mark Setrakian, one of the technical people involved in the production of Jordan Wolfson's animatronic installation, was interviewed during the time *Colored Sculpture* was exhibited at the Stedelijk Museum. He shortly mentions that the functioning system within the puppet itself is fitted in an aluminum casing inside the puppets head. The aluminum casing absorbs the shocks and acts as an armor, which makes it relatively durable. He does mention however that the screen eyes of the puppet already had to be replaced dozens of times.

¹⁴ John D. Powell, "Preserving the un preservable: a study of destruction art in the contemporary museum" (MA thesis museum studies, University of Leicester, 2007), 15.

¹⁵ "Kunstwerk Jordan Wolfson in Stedelijk tijdelijk gesloten," *Het Parool* (6 December 2016).



Figure 4: Jordan Wolfson, *Colored Sculpture*, 2016.
Photo: Josh White.



Figure 5: Jordan Wolfson, *Colored Sculpture*, 2016. Photo: Josh White.

Mark Setrakian also mentions that, at the time of the interview, *Colored Sculpture's* head had been replaced because it had suffered too much abrasion and too much of the colours had worn off.¹⁶ The question is: who decided that this excessive abrasion traversed the parameters of acceptable change within this installation? And who set these parameters of acceptable change in the first place? It is quite probable that these types of issues surrounding maintenance and the intention of the artist have been discussed with Jordan Wolfson himself during the production process, before installation and also before acquisition at the Tate Modern in 2018.



Figure 6: Jordan Wolfson exhibition at Tate London, *Colored Sculpture* display closed for maintenance. Photo found on Instagram account of @lulelulwin

Documentation, collaboration and responsibility

The approach taken by a conservator when dealing with complex time-based installation works like *Colored Sculpture* is highly individual for each case study and depended on many different factors, there is no best practice. The role of the conservator has changed in its approach to

¹⁶ Yoran Custers, "Het technische brein achter de robotkunst van Jordan Wolfson," *Vice* (20 February 2017).

dealing with contemporary artworks. Their responsibility is shifting away from keeping a physical object in its original state as long as possible towards the recording of extensive documentation on the concept of a contemporary artwork.¹⁷ The conservator must try to capture and record the identity of the artwork by figuring out the work defining properties of the artwork and establishing the parameters of acceptable change. The best way to capture the identity of the artwork and find out the artist's intent is through interviewing the artist and other stakeholders involved. Installation instructions can be drawn up together with the artist and used as reference in the future. Different iterations of the installation that were approved by the artist can also act as models. Documenting these installations while on display using video and photographs can serve as later instruction.

During a conversation with Jordan Wolfson and the production company Killstress it was confirmed that *Colored Sculpture* was to be treated as a conceptual artwork, failing technologies could be replaced, the artwork needed to remain in functioning order. After *Colored Sculpture* was acquired in 2018 the conservation, art handling, maintenance and registrar teams decided to fully document the installation process while also engaging with the artist and Killstress. In the case of *Colored Sculpture* maintenance is not only important in order to keep the artwork functioning but the artwork must also meet industry health and safety standards, which will require regular updates.¹⁸

Acquiring a complex time-based media installation such as *Colored Sculpture* is a big responsibility and must be carefully considered by institutions. Dutch curator Frederik Leen discourages (public) museum's acquisition of artworks with little or no material endurance. He believes that collecting these types of artwork contradict the museum's primary task to preserve the works in its collection. He also argues that the financial responsibility for maintenance and conservation is irresponsible. Lastly he mentions the difficulties that arise when the artist's intent and instructions for installation are not known.

Conclusion

Acquiring a Time-Based Media Installation such as *Colored Sculpture* takes nerve and determination. There is not one way to deal with the challenges posed during the conservation of complex Time-Based Media Installations and most of these artworks require a highly individualistic approach. Time, money and interdisciplinary expertise are essential for the artworks performance and future. Nevertheless, this essay has proven that there are a few crucial practices that will prolong the lifespan of these artworks and help conservators deal with the complexity of these installations:

- The identity of the artworks must be captured in order to preserve it for posterity. The work defining properties and parameters of acceptable change need to be established and recorded. Ideally, the artist and other important stakeholders would be interviewed in order to establish these parameters.
- Full documentation of the first installation process after acquisition or during a first exhibition.
- The artwork should be thoroughly photo and video documented during a (preferably artist approved) display.
- Collaboration and communication between different stakeholders is essential.

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¹⁷ Olivia Poloni, "Life doesn't last, art doesn't last, it doesn't matter," (Melbourne: University of Melbourne, October 2005) (<http://www.incca.org/>), 28 July 2007, 2.

¹⁸ Patricia Falcao, "Case Study (2016), by Jordan Wolfson," <https://www.li-ma.nl/lima/sites/default/files/Case%20Study%20-%20Colored%20Sculpture%20%282016%29%20by%20Jordan%20Wolfson.pdf>.

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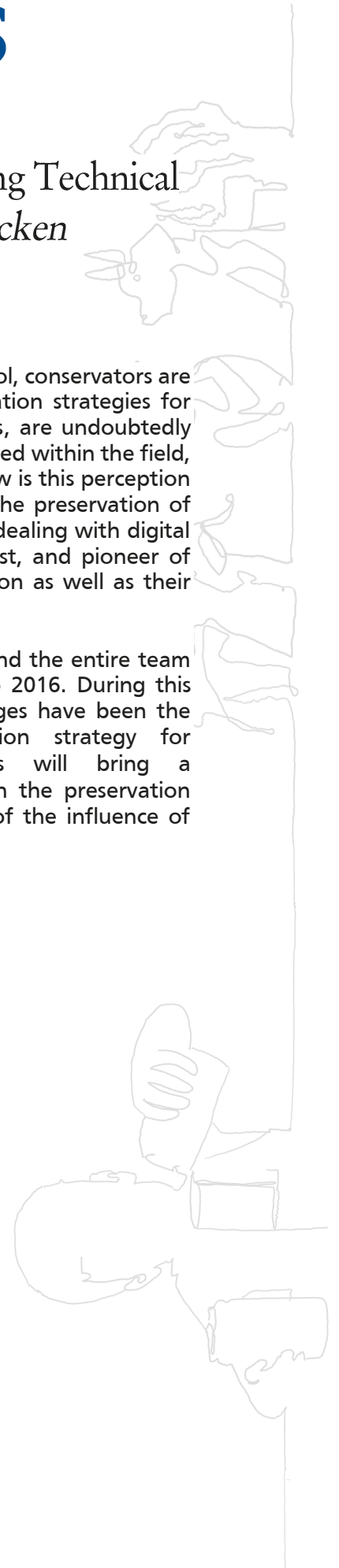
Thesis Subjects

Move with the Times: Preservation Strategies Facing Technical Shifts. *Case Studies of Early Works by Peter Struycken*

Marie Ducimetière

In a world where technologies evolve with a speed that is beyond our control, conservators are faced with the never-ending task of updating their knowledge. Preservation strategies for digital art, for which there is no common consensus among professionals, are undoubtedly impacted by this rapid evolution. Although these topics are regularly discussed within the field, some elements are left out: How do younger generations perceive art? How is this perception impacted by technological developments and how should this influence the preservation of works and their exhibition? These points are even more interesting when dealing with digital art from the 1970s or 1980s. Early works by Peter Struycken, Dutch artist, and pioneer of computer-based art, are part of this category of works whose preservation as well as their display are challenged by obsolescence.

This thesis is a continuation of the work carried out by Nina Van Doren and the entire team that participated in the Transformation Digital Art project from 2014 to 2016. During this project, three works from Peter Struycken presenting their own challenges have been the subject of a study to determine the most suitable preservation strategy for them: *DISP* (1977), *SHFT-34* (1982-2007) and *Blocks* (1998). This thesis will bring a contemporary look, 5 years after the end of this innovative project, on the preservation strategies chosen at that time. The diagnosis will focus on the analysis of the influence of technological shifts on the preservation strategies for software-based art.



Future-Proofing 'PIXI': Evaluation of Risk Assessment Methodologies as a Tool for Determining the Vulnerable Aspects of a Site-Specific Interactive Software-Based Public Art Installation

Floortje Evelein

KEYWORDS: risk assessment, interactive, site-specific, computer-based, public art, installation art

The art installation *PIXI* (2017) by artist collective WERC is a fairly recent artwork. *PIXI* is described by WERC as a "digital organism" and could be qualified as a site-specific and interactive software-based public artwork. The installation consists of over a thousand lights that are placed on the trees of a forest in Drouwen in Drenthe, the Netherlands. It is reinstalled every year at the beginning of the fall and is exhibited until the beginning of January. The visitor carries a lantern and is invited to walk through the trees, following a path. The pixies on the trees respond to the presence of the visitor, but also to each other: they are communicating with each other following behaviours as found in nature such as a flock of birds or a group of fireflies, which creates a swarm-like pattern. Once the visitor passes and the pixies aren't triggered anymore, they fade out into darkness.

Only a few years old, it has not had the time to "properly" degrade and develop scars from standing the test of time. Despite its young age, the thesis that will be written on this artwork will take the form of a risk assessment. Performing a risk assessment for the case study "*PIXI*" is a valuable addition to the field of conservation of contemporary art; the computer-based nature of the work makes it highly vulnerable for technical obsolescence, so it is better to prepare for that inevitable occurrence while the artists are still around than to wait until proper treatment might be too late. Moreover, the work touches on different themes in conservation that are still in development and would benefit from practical research. In addition, the thesis would serve as extensive documentation for the work which it is currently lacking. Lastly, conducting this research not only serves to prolong the lifespan of the work, but it will have the secondary function of testing established risk assessment approaches.

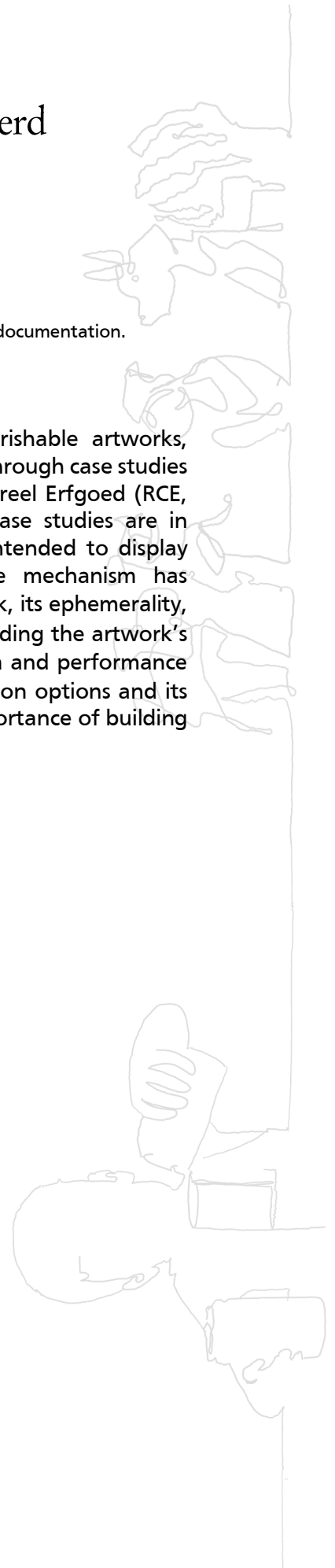
The aim is highlight the vulnerable areas and thus ensuring a long(er) life span. Through conducting interviews with the artist and other stakeholders, identifying the work-defining properties, gaining insight on the possible risks and analysing their potential impact and consequences, more information will be acquired on how to properly care for this work.

Afterlife Choices for Botanical Art: Conserving Sjoerd Buisman's Growing Artworks

Erica Loh

KEYWORDS: Botanical art, living installation, contemporary art conservation, reinstallation, documentation.

This thesis aims to explore conservation approaches for living and perishable artworks, specifically those with botanical components that demonstrate a life cycle, through case studies of Sjoerd Buisman's growing artworks from the Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed (RCE, Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands) collection. The selected case studies are in different states of inactivity – some containing dried plants that were intended to display growth, some with missing equipment, and some where the entire mechanism has deteriorated. For living installations, discussions on the ontology of the work, its ephemerality, and analysing the ethics of re-enactment or replication are necessary in guiding the artwork's future presentations. Inspired by recent developments in time-based media and performance art preservation methods, this research will not only investigate conservation options and its implications on the artwork's continued identity, but also highlight the importance of building the artwork's archive in safeguarding the installation's concept.



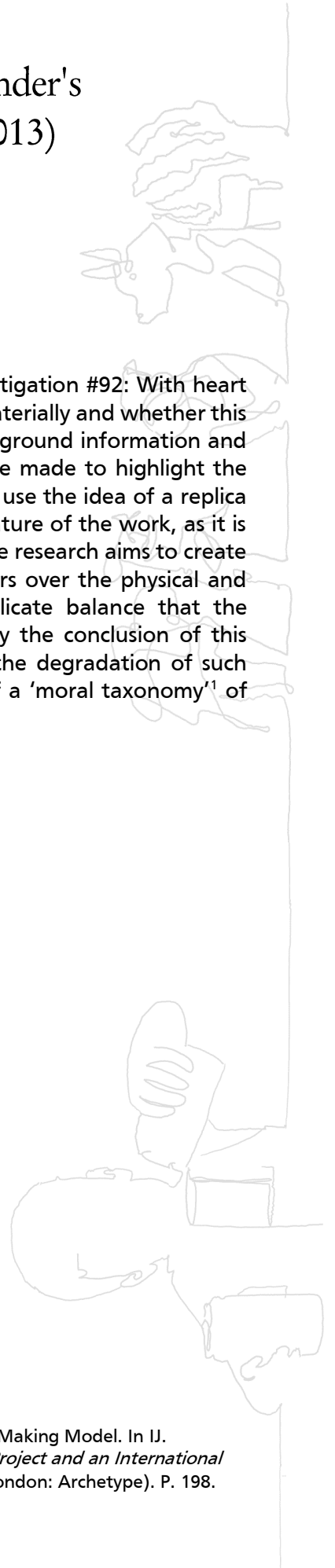
Materiality in Flux: The Diagnosis of Ryan Gander's “Investigation # 92: With heart dotted ‘I’s’” (2013)

Anthi Soulioti

KEYWORDS: Contemporary art conservation, toothpaste, conceptual, replica, ethics.

The main focus of the thesis is to investigate how the artwork “Investigation #92: With heart dotted ‘I’s’” (2013) by British artist Ryan Gander (1976) is changing materially and whether this change is affecting its conceptual aspects. The research into the background information and the materials that are affected will be presented. An attempt will be made to highlight the ethical issues that surround the decision-making process and perhaps use the idea of a replica to elicit responses that would aid in understanding the conceptual nature of the work, as it is co-constructed by the different epistemic agents; the stakeholders. The research aims to create fertile ground for further discussions about the perception of viewers over the physical and conceptual aspects of contemporary artworks, as well as the delicate balance that the conservator should maintain during the decision-making process. By the conclusion of this research, it is hoped that there will be a better understanding of the degradation of such artworks and that the project will contribute to the development of a ‘moral taxonomy’¹ of related cases in contemporary art conservation.

¹ van de Vall, R. (2005). Painful Decisions: Philosophical Considerations on a Decision-Making Model. In IJ. Hummelen, & D. Sille (Eds.), *Modern Art: Who Cares? An Interdisciplinary Research Project and an International Symposium on the Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art* (pp. 196-200). (London: Archetype). P. 198.



Caring for *Annelies, looking for completion* (2018): a Risk Assessment Based Research into the Values and Vulnerabilities of a 'Fleshy' Robotic Artwork

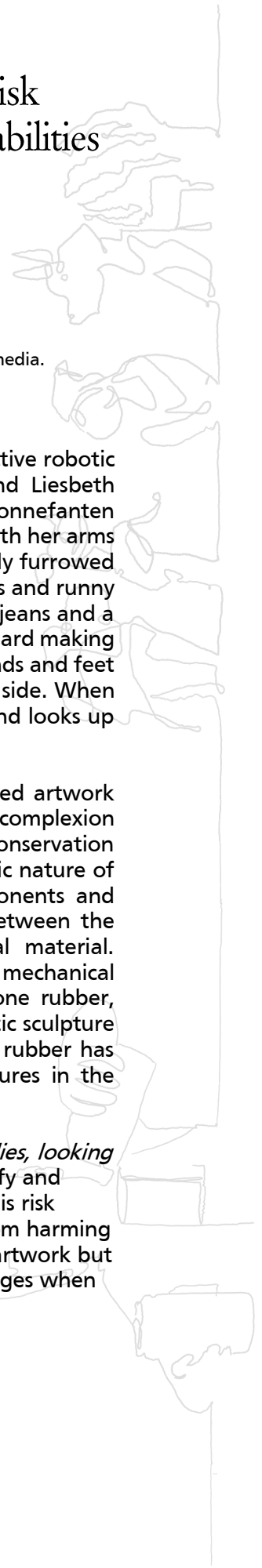
Marieke Voogd

KEYWORDS: Robotic art, L.A. Raeven, case-based risk assessment, silicone hyperrealism, time-based media.

The thesis will consist of a case-based risk assessment centered around the interactive robotic artwork *Annelies, looking for completion* (2018) by Dutch twins Angelique and Liesbeth Raeven - who go by the moniker L.A. Raeven - from the collection of the museum Bonnefanten in Maastricht. The artwork consists of an robotic third sister who sits on the floor with her arms resting on her knees. Her realistic face is contorted with sadness, her brow is deeply furrowed and the corners of her mouth are downturned. Her cheeks are glistening with tears and runny mascara and she holds a crumpled tissue in her left hand. Annelies wears a pair of jeans and a long sleeve shirt and a pair of flip flops lays next to her bare feet. Annelies can be heard making sobbing sounds and her shoulders move up and down. Annelies' eyes blink, her hands and feet make subtle movements and she moves her head up and down and from side to side. When Annelies is touched and comforted by the visitor she stops crying for a moment and looks up at her sympathizer.

Annelies, looking for completion is a complex, high maintenance and multifaceted artwork that will likely pose many different challenges for conservators trying to preserve its complexion for posterity. Robotic artworks face conservators with challenges typical for the conservation of time-based media art, such as technological and digital obsolescence. The kinetic nature of robotic artworks brings forth unpreventable wear-and-tear of moveable components and forces conservators to rethink the concept of authenticity, having to choose between the upkeep of functionality and performance versus the preservation of original material. Furthermore, *Annelies, looking for completion* is a 'fleshy' robotic artwork. The mechanical endoskeleton of the robotic sculpture is covered in hyperrealistic, skin-like silicone rubber, finished with details such as pores, wrinkles, and hairs. The movement of the robotic sculpture puts high mechanical stress on the elastomeric plastic material and since silicone rubber has poor mechanical strength at room temperature, this stress could lead to fractures in the material.

The goal of this academic thesis will be to diagnose the current condition of *Annelies, looking for completion* and to apply the methodology of risk assessment in order to identify and prevent risks that may cause harm to the artwork in the future. In all likelihood, this risk assessment will help the Bonnefanten to prepare for and to prevent these risks from harming the artwork. Hopefully, this research will not only be applicable to this particular artwork but will serve as a useful source for future conservators confronted with similar challenges when treating 'fleshy' robotic artworks.



Biographies



Marie Ducimetière is a full-time student in the master's program Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage at the University of Amsterdam. She studies there traditional conservation ethics as much as new conservation strategies. In 2018, she obtained her bachelor's degree in preventive conservation from the Haute Ecole of Neuchatel and worked during the following year at the Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne and as a collaborator in preventive conservation.



Floortje Evelein received her bachelor in Art History in 2017 at the University of Amsterdam, which included a minor in Conservation and Restoration. After doing an internship at the workshop of Atelier van Lieshout in 2019, she is currently a student at the master program Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage in the discipline Contemporary Art at the University of Amsterdam.



Ellen Jansen is a conservator of modern and contemporary art. After finishing her MA study in Art History in 2006 at the VU University Amsterdam, she enrolled in the training program in Conservation and Restoration of Modern and Contemporary Art at the UvA (2007-2012). During the program she did internships at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum Twenthe in Enschede and the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo. She has a long history in museum practice, mainly focusing on analogue and digital imaging, working closely with conservation departments. In 2012, she started as a lecturer in conservation practice and assistant coordinator within the contemporary art training program at the UvA. With her colleague Evelyne Snijders, she coordinates the Advanced Professional Programme in Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage at the same university.



Erica Loh is a second-year master's student at the University of Amsterdam's Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage programme, specializing in contemporary art. Prior to joining the programme in 2019, she has gained experience as a conservation intern at the University of Hong Kong and M+ Museum in Hong Kong. She received her Master of Arts degree in East Asian Art from the University of Manchester in 2012. Her upcoming thesis research is in the authenticity of Sjoerd Buisman's living artworks.



Evelyne Snijders is a conservator of modern and contemporary art. After graduating from the Gerrit Rietveld Academy and obtaining her Propedeuse in Art History at the university of Amsterdam, she started the postdoctoral training program in Conservation of Modern Art at the SRAL in Maastricht (2005-2009). Since 2011 she has been a lecturer in conservation practice and assistant coordinator for the programme Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage at the University of Amsterdam in the specialisation contemporary art. Together with her colleague Ellen Jansen, she is coordinates the Advanced Professional Programme in Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage at the same university.



Anthi Soulioti was born in Greece and studied Conservation of Antiquities and Works of Art at the Technological Educational Institute of Athens, Greece and the Complutense University of Madrid, Spain. Anthi is currently on her second year Masters' program of Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage at the University of Amsterdam, specialising in Contemporary Art. She is one of the founders of ST.A.CO., a street art conservation team based in Athens and wrote her thesis on the Conservation of Public Murals. During 2014-2019, Anthi worked as a paper, parchment and book conservator in various archives, libraries and cultural institutions of the UK. Her special interests revolve around the ethics and theory of conservation, the impact of replicas in the conservation practice, optimisation of documentation's efficiency, and the role of the audience in the decision-making process.



Sanneke Stigter Dr. Sanneke Stigter is Assistant Professor Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage at the University of Amsterdam, having set up the Contemporary Art specialisation in 2007. She worked at several museums and was Head Conservator for Contemporary Art and Modern Sculpture at the Kröller-Müller Museum, where she also curated several exhibitions. She sits on various boards (SBMK, INCCA, and ICOM-CC Fund) and has been involved in many international research projects on contemporary art conservation (Inside Installations, NeCCAR, NACCA). She has published widely on the subject, focussing on conceptual art, artist interviews and new approaches in conservation research, such as autoethnography.



Marieke Voogd obtained a bachelor's degree in Art History at the University of Amsterdam in 2017. After receiving her bachelor she studied for one year at the Royal Academy of Art in the Hague, while also working as a tour guide at the architecture museum Het Schip in Amsterdam. Currently she is in her second year of the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage Master Programme at the University of Amsterdam. Her chosen specialization is Contemporary Art.

Colophon

This booklet is published on the occasion of the

*Ciprian Mureşan Video Installation
Research Exhibition and other
Contemporary Art Conservation
Student Projects 2020-2021*

10-11 May 2021
University of Amsterdam
C&R Media Art Conservation Lab
BG 5, Oudezijds Achterburgwal 233-
237, Amsterdam

Initiative by
Evelyne Sniijders
Ellen Jansen
Sanneke Stigter

Concept and Graphic design
Evelyne Sniijders, Marie Ducimetière

Publisher
University of Amsterdam, Conservation
and Restoration of Cultural Heritage

Online
<https://doi.org/10.21942/uva.14529345>

Printer
www.studentendrukwerk.nl

Limited printed edition
30

The papers in this publication have been written by students during the Master's programme in Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage in the specialisation Contemporary Art at the University of Amsterdam. These are the original papers and the text is not edited or proofread by English native speakers.

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SPECIAL THANKS GOES OUT TO

Ciprian Mureşan for providing his video artworks for this project. We would also like to give him a special thanks for taking the time to do an interview in connection with our exhibition.

And we would also like to thank our guest lecturers of the media module: Ramon Coelho (Video Projects), Annet Dekker (University of Amsterdam), Ciprian Mureşan, Anna Schaeffler, Martijn Stegeman (University of Amsterdam), Ivo van Stiphout (Videoartlab), Andreas Weisser (Restaumedia), Gaby Wijers (LIMA), Maarten Zeinstra (IP Squared), and everybody who has been part of the educational programme.

For more information, please visit UvA's Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage department website <http://www.uva.nl/conservation-and-restoration>, and for the programme scan this QR-code:

