ECOLOGIES OF MEMORY IN THE CONSERVATION OF *TEN YEARS ALIVE ON THE INFINITE PLAIN*

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This paper discusses the role of memory ecologies in the conservation and activation of complex performance artworks. Taking Tony Conrad's *Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain* 1972 as its case study, it examines how such works can live and thrive in the museum when we understand the people, structures and technology involved in transmitting them; trace the various forms of remembering them; and examine how the artwork and its associated memories are transformed across time. Through this analysis, the essay considers the part that museums have to play in fostering and contributing to ecologies of practice as they conserve and activate these artworks in the future.

INTRODUCTION

We all know that there are things that are not easy to describe – objects, moments, feelings. The meaning and nature of these things is fundamentally dependent on our experience of them; they are shaped by our cultural and social background, inflected by memories, emotions and the ways we understand the world around us. How would you convey the colour red, or the smell of the sea breeze, to anyone who has never sensed it? How would you transmit the feeling of holding your child for the first time, or of hearing the perfect rendition of your favourite song?

Fig.1
Lee Mingwei
Our Labyrinth, 2015–ongoing
Performance, people
Overall display dimensions variable
Tate
Courtesy Power Station of Art, Shanghai

This paper addresses artworks that are grounded in the experience of practice and the practice of experience. It discusses the transmission and safeguarding of artworks that are materialised as events, such as performance artworks. These artworks may be limited to specific ways of performing a gesture, such as the sweeping movement needed to perform Lee Mingwei's *Our Labyrinth* 2015–ongoing (fig.1); or a determined sequence of gestures – a choreography – as in the case of Trisha Brown's *Set and Reset* 1983; or the performance of a musical piece that lacks a clear, recognised and consistent score – a paradigmatic example being *Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain* 1972 by the artist and filmmaker Tony Conrad (fig.2). It is this latter artwork that is the focus of this paper.

Fig.2
Tony Conrad
Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain 1972, performance at LightNight, Tate Liverpool, 17 May 2019
Performance, musical instruments and film, 16mm, 4 projections, black and white, and sound (stereo)
Duration: 90 min
Photo: Mark McNulty

Ten Years Alive is a complex performance and multimedia work that includes the live performance of a musical ensemble and a projectionist. The work was created by the filmmaker, artist, musician and teacher Tony Conrad in 1972, and was directed and performed by him at least eleven times before his death in 2016. The musical ensemble comprises two violins, a bass and a long string drone – an instrument developed and made by Conrad himself. Over the course of ninety minutes, these musicians play a sustained drone sound that is complemented visually by four film projections on a wall. The film was made by Conrad and features a vertical stripe pattern that flickers; visual effects are produced through subtle movements of the projectors throughout the performance.

The difficulty involved in describing artworks like *Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain* (hereafter *Ten Years Alive*) is explicitly connected to the difficulties involved in conserving them. What makes these artworks so hard to conserve? Why it is important to conserve them nonetheless? How can the museum adapt its procedures to allow artworks like *Ten Years Alive* to live and thrive in their collections?

Ten Years Alive was selected as the second case study of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation-funded project Reshaping the Collectible: When Artworks Live in the Museum, and was investigated by an interdisciplinary research team that included researchers from the project and members of the time-based media conservation team at Tate. One strand of research for this case study was the importance of social interactions for the understanding, conservation and stewardship of complex performance artworks such as *Ten Years Alive*. This essay presents my research within this strand, which draws upon the notion of 'memory ecologies' developed by the memory studies scholar Andrew Hoskins to describe the interactions between individual and collective memories.[1] Hoskins employs the idea of ecology to address these interactions within the societal fabric, which is made up of relationships between people, structures and technology – in the context of this paper, I am calling these interactions 'practice'.[2]

Hoskins characterises the ecological approach to memory studies, or how things are remembered and forgotten, as follows:

> An ecological approach steps back for a view of the whole, to make claims about the sum of the parts. So, rather than hiving 'memory' off into distinct and separate zones or even 'containers' – the body, the brain, the social, the cultural etcetera – an ecological approach is interested in how these together work or don't work in producing memory. Put differently,

> remembering is not reducible to any one part, but is made through an ongoing interaction between all the parts.[3]

I draw on this notion to understand how artworks and their social contexts are developed, remembered and transmitted. This involves exploring how works are produced and performed by identifying the people, structures and technology involved in transmitting them; tracing forms of remembering them; and examining how the artworks and their associated memories are transformed across time. In analysing the ecologies of practice that are developed through the creation of *Ten Years Alive*, and how those ecologies of practice then constitute or are deployed as memories, I aim to provide a framework to investigate the conservation of artworks of this kind. My perspective is informed by my experience as a conservator and a researcher – which is highlighted in the state of the art report produced as part of this research project[4] – and by the research process undertaken by two teams of which I am a part, namely the research project team and the time-based media conservation team, in responding to the questions emerging from the case study.

Digital media plays an indispensable role in today's forms of memorialisation – including in museum systems, protocols and forms of documentation.[5] In this paper, I articulate some of the ways in which digital media becomes entangled with forms of memory. Again, drawing on the ecological approach developed by Hoskins – which effectively troubles the boundaries between digital and analogue, body and prosthetics, human and non-human – I propose that the way that affects are transmitted can change in an ever more digitally mediated society.[6] In this sense, the digital realm is expanding the ecologies of memory of Conrad's *Ten Years Alive*.

This essay is divided into four main sections. The first discusses the challenges that performance artworks pose to museums and introduces the specific characteristics of *Ten Years Alive*. In this section, I discuss the differences between artworks that are meant to be activated by the artist and others that are created to be activated by others. I argue that *Ten Years Alive* was not designed to exist without Conrad's participation and that this is one of the primary reasons why the practices that sustain the artwork's realisation and transmission are so hard to conserve. In other words, the memory ecology of the work is dependent on specific people and contexts, ones that are not easily replicated by existing means. The second section of this essay maps out the characteristics of the memory ecology of the work, exploring the conditions that led *Ten Years Alive* to be shown multiple times. The third section explores how museums can participate in triggering the creation of those conditions. In analysing the strategies employed in the activation and ongoing care of *Ten Years Alive*, I argue that the museum is a site where complex social and affective relationships take place, and that those relationships are essential to conserving complex performance artworks. The fourth and final section reflects on how we can think about the conservation of performance artworks through the mapping and ongoing creation of ecologies of memory for artworks such as this one. In this final part I propose that the mutation of practices in the context of changing technological landscapes and increasingly mediated societies can lead to a multiplication of ecologies. I argue that in this sense, those ecologies are what effectively preserve the memory of these works, and that the museum can not only be part of such ecologies, but can also become a propeller of memories, affects and

emotional connections. This last section draws on feminist and post-Marxist theory to further discuss the ethical ramifications of this understanding of conservation, arguing for the reconceptualisation of *Ten Years Alive* as a performance that is both distributed and fluid in its conceptual and material identity.

1. PERFORMANCE, DELEGATION AND THE MUSEUM

Performance art, in the Western sense of the term, is said to have emerged in the mid-twentieth century. Although its exact chronology is contested, art historians and artists agree that the movement gained traction in the 1960s and 1970s.[7] Performance art created at that time was mostly characterised by a critique of the commodification of art,[8] an understanding of art as action[9] or event,[10] and a strong reliance on the artist's (bodily) presence.[11] The importance of the event as a site of interaction between artist and audience at a given time[12] led to performance art being considered unrepeatable, indescribable, and impossible to document or represent.[13] These views have been amply discussed, and disputed or adopted, by numerous scholars working within different fields and applying different ways of looking at performance. What remains unquestioned, though, is the idea that performance art resists traditional forms of documentation, museumification and conservation.

Despite the challenge that performance art offers to ideas of continuance or longevity, manifestations of the genre have found their way into museum collections. Museums started collecting live performance in 2005,[14] with Tate being the institution inaugurating what is now considered a trend.[15] The acquisition of live performance into museum collections was promoted, on the one hand, by the continued use of this medium by artists, as well as years of development of institutional capacity and resourcing within museums, and, on the other hand, by changes in artistic practices that made performance art more collectable. These were, of course, concurrent processes – the development of institutional capacity was propelled by the acquisition of works deemed more collectable, while the production of artworks that would fit the museum structure was to the benefit of both institutions and artists. One of the aspects that has contributed to the growing collectability of performance art was the development of what has been called 'delegated performance'. This term was coined by the art historian Claire Bishop to describe performance artworks that are not executed by the artist but by other selected individuals, or, in Bishop's words,

> [T]he act of hiring non-professionals or specialists in other fields to undertake the job of being present and performing at a particular time and a particular place on behalf of the artist, and following his/her instructions.[16]

Delegated performances are, therefore, not as closely associated with the body of the artist who devised them. Nor is there such emphasis on the idea of the performance as a single event, never to be repeated or reproduced in any way, as was the case for most performances created during the 1960s and 1970s.[17] Delegated performance works are additionally often acquired as a set of (oral or written) instructions that can be followed by hired performers or members of the audience. In some cases, delegated performances, while performed by others, imply the

collaboration of the artist or a representative at each activation, which in itself troubles this as a straightforward artistic category.

Of the twenty-five performance artworks either in or entering the Tate collection at the time of writing, all but one – namely *Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain*, as I will argue here – can be considered delegated performances. Some of these perfectly fulfil the characteristics defined by Bishop. One is Roman Ondák's *Good Feelings in Good Times* 2003, a forty-five-minute performance consisting of an artificial queue in which people wait without a purpose. The performance is initiated either by volunteers or hired performers, who are instructed to dress as ordinary visitors and to provide no information about the performance if asked about the artwork or the purpose of the queue. It can be shown by following the written instructions provided by the artist and developed by the time-based media conservation team at Tate, which take into account the specificity of the site where the artwork is displayed and the relationship with the performers.

Fig.3
Kevin Beasley
Your face is / is not enough 2016, performance at Liverpool Biennial 2018, Tate Liverpool, 14 July 2018
Microphone stands, gas masks, megaphones, polyurethane foam, polyurethane resin, clothing, feathers, baseball caps, umbrella frame and other materials
Overall display dimensions variable
Tate
Image courtesy the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York
Photo: Pete Carr

Other examples of delegated performance art do not include written instructions. That is the case, for example, for *This is Propaganda* 2002 by Tino Sehgal, and *Your face is / is not enough* 2016 by Kevin Beasley (fig.3). *This is Propaganda* is an action undertaken by hired performers dressed up as members of gallery staff. As a visitor enters the space, the performers sing 'This is propaganda, you know, you know; this is propaganda, you know, you know', followed by the artwork's title, the name of the artist and the year of its creation. Sehgal has refused to provide written instructions (or any type of documentation whatsoever), so the artist and/or his assistants transmit the instructions on how to perform the artwork orally to new performers each time *This is Propaganda* is set to be activated. Upon its acquisition by Tate, Sehgal passed on the knowledge needed to perform this work to Tate staff, who have worked to actively remember and transmit the work to new performers each time it is activated. In the case of *Your face is / is not enough*, Beasley and his studio train a set of performers to carry out a scripted action. The artist has provided documentation of past performances, and a score of the artwork has been developed by the time-based media team using a tool that is called a Performance Specification.[18] There are aspects of the work that are nonetheless dependent on the engagement with the artist and that are negotiated during the rehearsals of the work.

Within the range of resources needed to activate these two artworks, *Your face is / is not enough* is located somewhere between *Good Feelings in Good Times*, which is purely dependent on written instructions, and *This is Propaganda*, which is materialised solely through the interaction between the artist and/or his assistants and a group of performers. Despite the different approaches to their activation, all three of these artworks are delegated – and intentionally so. In other words, they were conceived as performances that ought to be transmitted to new performers each time they are activated. Instructions can be more explicit or more implicit; the material conditions artworks need in order to be materialised can vary; and yet they all share the inherent characteristic of having been created to be transmitted. To use an idea coined in the field of memory studies by Alison Landsberg,[19] these records of practice, this mediation of memory through instructions or scores, works as a sort of 'prosthetic memory' that allow us to forget how to perform the work, while at the same time facilitating the means for performing it again. I will argue that this is true for all but one performance artwork in Tate's collection: Conrad's *Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain*.

Fig.4
Performance of Tony Conrad, *Fifty-Five Years Alive on the Infinite Plain*, The Tanks, Tate Modern, London, 18 January 2017
Photo: Tate

The acquisition of *Ten Years Alive* by Tate started in 2016, at a time when Conrad was quite ill and shortly before he died.[20] After Conrad's death, a performance of the artwork that took place in the Tanks at Tate Modern in January 2017 allowed the conservation team to start to understand the production aspects of the artwork and bring them into contact with the performers, who were past Conrad collaborators (fig.4).[21] These included Rhys Chatham, the long string instrument player at the artwork's inaugural event at The Kitchen, New York in 1972; Angharad Davies, a violinist who had performed as Conrad's supporting violin in several musical pieces since 2005; Dominic Lash, a bass player who had performed in *Unprojectable: Projection and Perspective*, another work by Conrad shown at Tate Modern in 2008; and Andrew Lampert, an artist and projectionist who had been involved in projecting the film elements of *Ten Years Alive* on multiple occasions. Information gathered by Tate's time-based media conservation team in 2017 highlighted a number of material aspects of *Ten Years Alive* that seemed to have some sort of permanence, such as the characteristics of the film materials and the overall production of the musical performance. The process of gathering this information also raised some concerns about the long-term transmission of the work. While the material aspects of performing the work without Conrad present were resolved, with Conrad's violin part being replaced by an audio track recorded in 1994, it was still unclear how the performance could take place without him or the guidance of his trusted friends and collaborators.

Conrad refused the idea of a score, often providing incomplete instructions to performers, even those who had never played with him before. His refusal to characterise *Ten Years Alive* through notation is related to his opposition to the figure of the composer. In the words of Brian Duguid, who interviewed Conrad for *EST Magazine* in 1996, the absence of a score offered 'a way for classical music to ditch compositional authoritarianism in favour of the improvisational collaboration already mapped out by jazz musicians'.[22] The lack of an explicit score, however, does not imply that *Ten Years Alive* lacks structure. On the contrary, the musical performance of the work follows a strict pattern. In the interviews that we conducted with Conrad's past collaborators between September 2018 and January 2020, many of the musicians and projectionists recalled having to follow instructions with some (but not much) space for variation.[23] The lack of score might not seem so important given the relative simplicity of the work, which follows specific patterns that are discernible from past recordings: the musical performance essentially consists of a steady (and yet varied) rhythmic drone sound sustained over ninety minutes. But hearing the recordings of past performances, we can also identify a

subtle variation of the drone sound throughout; an interplay of the various instruments. Other variations in the different performances are less subtle, with differences in the pitch, rhythm and visual apparatus. This tells us that the work is more complex than we might initially think.

The performance that needs to happen for this complex musical and film work to be activated seems to indicate, at first glance, that it is 'delegated' in nature. On the one hand, contemporary musical pieces are usually deemed repeatable or prone to interpretation by others,[24] which also tends to happen with film projections that are created to be screened in different contexts.[25] On the other hand, if we pay attention to the material history of this artwork, or how it has been realised across time, we can see how its performance is intertwined with layers of complexity that suggest this work is not delegated.

The artwork has been performed many times, changing materially with every activation. Conrad had multiple collaborators, often relying on local communities of curators, producers, musicians and film projectionists to expand the pool of performers. Some of those collaborators participated in more than one instance of the work, while others would be called in for a specific event. All of these collaborators participated in the various forms the artwork has taken over time, and they all contributed to the build-up of practices that characterise those renditions. The approach Conrad had to his teaching would also render different performative materialisations of the artwork. Finally, even if we were able to find a way to create a score, or some kind of documentation that allowed for all the material and technical aspects of the artwork to be detailed and transmitted, *Ten Years Alive* seems to rely on much more than a set of instructions to exist. In other words, although some aspects of the work do seem to be delegated, many others seem to rely on the development of the work's identity by the artist himself.

Understanding the material history of *Ten Years Alive* alongside the memories and the emotions that constitute it therefore became a priority for us as we worked on its activation and acquisition – otherwise, how could we know what we were aiming to transmit and preserve? [26] How could we even begin to understand how the artwork was materialised if we were not paying attention to the uncertainties, the characters, the relationships between the people who were involved in its creation? Although these questions certainly resonate with all performance artworks, they gain a further significance with works like *Ten Years Alive* that were not conceived to be performed without their creator.[27]

2. MAPPING ECOLOGIES OF MEMORY: EARLIER ACTIVATIONS OF *TEN YEARS ALIVE*

Sometimes it is hard to pin down what we remember about a given moment in time. As time passes by, we often feel that specific aspects of that moment – the smell, the sound, the emotion – slip through our fingers and become something other than a memory: just a feeling that we knew, and that is now lost. But experience tells us that there are traces that stay with us and are dragged through time. Not solely material, not solely affective, those traces sometimes return almost seamlessly to our minds, as if they were never gone. This experience was often

conveyed by people who participated in the quasi-archaeological process of recovering memories of the performances of *Ten Years Alive*. This process, which took place in 2019 and included archival research, interviews with past participants, the production of documentation, and fieldwork to test that documentation, made evident how many of the memories of performing this piece were attached to specific moments of interaction between Conrad and his collaborators, brought together by anecdotal narratives of friendship, mutual admiration, generosity and play.

We started the research by identifying and contacting the previous performers and collaborators, going back to the very first time the artwork was shown in 1972. The feeling of having lost the memory of the performance, or the lingering belief that almost all of it was already forgotten, were quite often one of the first things that past performers mentioned in our initial set of interviews. The recent death of Conrad seemed to add to that feeling of forgetting, as if misremembering, or failing to acknowledge the loss of his charismatic presence, could constitute a second death. In a sense, Conrad's absence made him ever more present, and the interviews we conducted revealed how much of *Ten Years Alive* was dependent on the relationships established between the artist, curators and performers. This is one of the aspects that differentiates this work from delegated performances, as the latter are defined as moveable and adaptable, without many dependencies grounded in intimacy.[28] In this section, I show that the development of those personal relationships was crucial for the artwork to be activated in the past, particularly in two areas – in the planning of the performance and in performing and rehearsing the work. I argue that these forms of interaction are the first triggers in the creation of ecologies of practice that are remembered and transmitted, therefore subsequently becoming ecologies of memory.

> FROM THE UNITED STATES TO EUROPE

Ten Years Alive was created in 1972, and its materialisation has been fostered in different geographies in the almost fifty years of its existence. The artwork was somewhat dormant after its first instantiation, receiving a new breath of life in the 1990s, when Conrad was more widely recognised by the experimental music world, particularly in the United States in Chicago and Buffalo, New York.[29]

Bringing along his wooden long string instrument and the tapes of the recording of the 1972 performance at The Kitchen on a visit to Chicago in 1994, Conrad decided to stage *Ten Years Alive* once again, this time as a recorded performance. The performers selected for this and subsequent renditions of the work during this decade were part of Conrad's social circle. In the words of the musician and scholar David Grubbs, who was also the long string instrument player for the 1994 performance,

> We were just, kind of, killing time one day. I think that we had finished [Conrad's album] 'Slapping Pythagoras' and he wanted to try … a studio recording of 'Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain'. So, we recorded that on Jim O'Rourke's TASCAM, eight-track machine, that was at the heart of his studio … We were set up as a trio in the living room, with Tony playing violin,

> Jim playing electric bass and me playing the long string drone … There were two short excerpts of this that were made available on a 7" record. I mean, it's the piece of music probably least likely suited to be released on a 7" record, so I think that they were probably approximately 3-minute excerpts on either side.[30]

Two years later, Grubbs collaborated with Conrad again, this time as the long string instrument player in a live performance of the artwork, which took place at the Empty Bottle, Chicago as part of a three-day festival organised by the record label Table of the Elements.[31] This was the first time *Ten Years Alive* had been shown since 1972. For Grubbs, it was also one of the first times he saw people coming from out of town to attend a festival dedicated to experimental music, which attests to the growing reputation of Table of the Elements and the interest in Conrad and his work. Conrad's contributions to experimental music – which included a collaboration he did with the Velvet Underground – had begun to be covered in newspapers and magazines such as the *New York Times* and *Artforum*. The release of Conrad's boxset 'Early Minimalism' by Table of the Elements in 1997, a year after the performance in Chicago, was also met with some excitement by the press.[32]

These two instances of the performance *Ten Years Alive* – a studio recording in 1994 and its activation in 1996, more than two decades after the inaugural performance in 1972 – can be characterised first by a reliance on a close social circle for the activation and musical performance of the work, and second by the expansion of this circle by means of distribution. The ecologies that were formed during these two years comprise the people who were able to hear *Ten Years Alive* through the 7" record produced in 1994, and those who were involved in activating and seeing the 1996 performance at the Empty Bottle in Chicago. These ecologies of memory rely on modes of inscription, such as the newspaper coverage of the event and of Conrad's work, effectively creating waves that resonate from a particular activation through to the future. The impact of these inscriptional forms on the way that Conrad is collectively remembered are complemented by the individual memories of Grubbs, which speak to the act of recording and performing the work in 1994 and 1996 and which are materialised in Grubbs's bodily memories through his practice as a performer and collaborator. Evidently, the memories articulated by Grubbs in the context of the interview conducted as part of this project were complemented by forms of mediated memory that were a composite of the many interactions Grubbs had with Conrad, his works, and the extensive network of documents, traces, people and technology that are part of the collective memory of *Ten Years Alive* and fed into his understanding of his own experience.

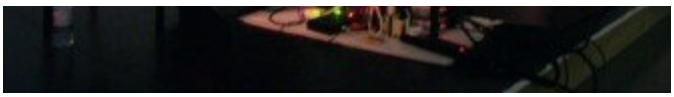

Fig.5
Performance of Tony Conrad, *Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain* as part of the festival Kill Your Timid Notion 06, Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee, 17 February 2006
Photo: Bryony McIntyre

The new millennium saw *Ten Years Alive* being shown in different contexts – namely in experimental cinema festivals and art galleries in Europe, first in Dortmund in 2004, and later in Dundee (2006; fig.5), Leeds (2006), Brussels (2007) and Bologna (2013). María Palacios Cruz, co-curator of the event that brought *Ten Years Alive* to BOZAR in Brussels in 2007,[33] describes the European context at the time as being deeply influenced by the experimental filmmaking scene in the United States. The scene gained recognition after a film festival that took place in Dortmund in 2004 called Expanded Cinema: Film als Spektakel, Ereignis und Performance (Expanded Cinema: Film as Spectacle, Event and Performance),[34] in which *Ten Years Alive* was shown alongside other works by Conrad.[35] This event was fully recorded and made available on DVD.[36]

Fig.6
Performance of Tony Conrad, *Fifty-One Years Alive on the Infinite Plain* as part of Live Arts Week Festival II, Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna (MAMbo), Bologna, 16 April 2013
Photo: Francesca Liccardi

The characteristics of the experimental filmmaking scene in Europe during the 2000s led to the circulation of works of expanded cinema mainly through festivals like the one in Dortmund, put together by film curators operating within a seemingly tight network of personal relationships. *Ten Years Alive* was activated multiple times during this decade, and its activation was triggered by a handful of curators that influenced each other: for example, Xavier García Bardón, co-curator of the 2007 event at BOZAR, was influenced by the performance he experienced in Dortmund in 2004; the event at BOZAR was, in turn, a key factor in the curator Andrea Lissoni's decision to show the artwork in Bologna in 2013 (fig.6), and to propose it for acquisition into Tate's collection in 2016.[37] This shows how the circle of people involved in the materialisation of the artwork expanded from the 1990s – when the sole activation of *Ten Years Alive* was triggered by a local ecology of practice – to the first decade of the 2000s – when the ecology of the work began to incorporate the memories of the curators and their own circles of influence. In the case of the activations that took place in the first decade of the new millennium, the social sphere of curators also influenced the choice of performers, who were brought from the local ecologies of (music, art, film) practices to materialise the work. In interviews with curators and performers of the activations in Leeds, Dundee, Brussels and Bologna, the interviewees stated that they relied on existing local ecologies, of which they were sometimes also a part.[38] This could mean contacting people they usually worked with, engaging with people who were known as especially skilled in a particular form of artistic practice in a particular local community, or asking for personal recommendations. The importance and impact of these previously developed personal relationships extends beyond the ways in which Conrad and Table of the Elements in the 1990s, and the promoters of *Ten Years Alive* in the following decade, selected the venues and the performers for the work. As will be discussed in what follows, personal relationships are also at the core of rehearsing and performing the work.

> THE ROLE OF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE

As mentioned above, Conrad's involvement in the multiple performances of *Ten Years Alive* was referred to by almost all individuals who were interviewed as part of this project. While the curators' engagement with Conrad started well before the performance itself, performers usually met him at rehearsals. Descriptions of the rehearsals vary across the interviewees, as the artwork was shown in multiple different contexts. For instance, Peter Spence, the projectionist for the performance at EVOLUTION 2006 festival in Leeds,[39] explained that in the context of the festival there was little to no time to rehearse directly with Conrad.[40] Spence was the projectionist assigned to several film projections happening on the same day, which further reduced the rehearsal time he had for *Ten Years Alive* in particular.[41] María Palacios Cruz, on the other hand, had kept her diary from the time of the activation at BOZAR in 2007, which showed that two four-hour rehearsals had taken place in the two afternoons before the performance.[42] Past collaborators also stressed that rehearsals were where Conrad would provide instructions to the performers. These were usually clear, if minimal, often delivered in a playful manner, and flexible enough to be interpreted and adapted by the individual performers. David Grubbs's

account of the first time Conrad told him how to play the long string instrument is particularly representative of Conrad's approach:

> So, the instructions were that the piece should be 90 minutes long and from the first 45 minutes, I could make upward moving slides, or glissandi, with the long string drone. Then if I felt that I was ready – and you know, this is sort of like Tony at his most performative and funniest – if I really felt that I was willing to take on that responsibility, I could change direction and do a downward movement glissando. But only if I was absolutely certain that the time had come, and it was justified.[43]

Rehearsals were the time when the limits of the artwork and its specific components were stretched. Conrad's instructions were somewhat open, and that openness would usually be put to the test by performers who would see how far they could go in interpreting the instructions in their own performance.[44] Palacios Cruz told the interviewers a story that summarises this phase of experimentation in the performance at BOZAR:

> It's funny, because I remember this thing with Els, who was doing the projectors, but I don't remember if it was during the rehearsals or in the actual piece. Her getting a bit too comfortable and going a bit too far with moving the projectors left to right, and Tony being like, 'No, no, that's not right.' And then getting the sense that there is, maybe, a range, like her, maybe, at first, being a bit worried, and then maybe getting a bit too like, 'I'm going to try moving them a bit diagonal,' and then him being like, 'No, I don't really like that.'[45]

Conrad's engagement with performers during rehearsals therefore allowed for, in the first instance, the delivery of instructions on how to perform the piece in a playful and open manner, and, secondly, the revision of the performers' interpretation of those instructions, which helped them realise, in that moment, the range of possibilities that were afforded to them.

The socially open and nurturing personality of the artist was paramount for the performers' idealisation of their experience playing the work. Almost all of the interviewees mentioned Conrad's kindness and the socialising that followed the performance of the piece. He was able to create forms of intimacy with the performers and curators, even through the limited contact that he had with them prior to the performance. Certain relationships became more relevant in the materialisation of the piece, with Conrad yielding some of his control to his closest allies. This was the case for the long string drone player M.V. Carbon who, after collaborating with Conrad, was brought by him to Brussels in 2007 to lead her own group of performers that were playing *Ten Years Alive*.[46] Likewise, Angharad Davies was called in as a recurrent player for *Ten Years Alive* after participating as a violinist for the 2006 performance in Dundee and in renditions of other artworks by Conrad; and producer Regina Greene took over some aspects of the production of the piece in the later years of Conrad's life.

The analysis of how *Ten Years Alive* was realised throughout time – its material history – shows how much of this artwork's materialisation is dependent on local ecologies, which are sustained by personal relationships, among other factors. Conrad has established meaningful relationships with curators and performers that were essential for the activation of specific

instances of the work, and for its transmission over time. These people, their memories, and the traces of their interaction with the work are all part of the expanded network that comprises the memory ecology of *Ten Years Alive* or, in other words, what allows the artwork to be remembered. The need for a script or score is somewhat relegated; more important are the forms of interaction that are sustained by affects, personalities and feelings. Going back to the idea of delegated performances, we can see that, with these select groups of people, Conrad did engage in a form of delegation that was built on mutual trust and intimacy. To curators Conrad delegated some of the material decisions about the conditions in which the performance was to take place, as well as the selection of performers. To performers he partially delegated the performance of the artwork and, to a trusted few, he delegated parts of performance's direction.

When bringing in an artwork like this to the museum, the role of the institution in these forms of delegation gains another weighting. How can we conserve an artwork that is apparently so dependent on a way of teaching and learning the work, and on the creating and fostering of personal relationships? Can an institution foster and sustain these relationships? Is the memory of the work enough to provide the museum with the means to engage new generations of performers in the same way? Can the museum create and foster the growth of the practice of *Ten Years Alive*, while also building on its existing ecologies of memory? And finally, can the museum be a place and agent of intimacy and care – a promoter of new memory ecologies? The sections that follow attempt to answer some of these critical questions.

3. MEMORY ECOLOGIES IN THE MUSEUM

The museum has long been considered a memory institution, or a place for keeping human-made things,[47] but perhaps not so much in the affective sense that I am using here. Aiming to preserve the heritage that it was intended to store within its collections, the museum has developed policies, practices and procedures across various departments that we have come to collectively call integrated approaches to collection care, with conservation being only one part of the structure that maintains artworks and artefacts throughout the years. Conservation's mission is to keep objects safe, accessible, and as complete as possible. For an ancient Roman vase, this can mean reducing handling or restoring the object within the limitations of its materiality and current condition. For artworks like *Ten Years Alive*, which are dependent on networks of affect, conservation is about gathering the material conditions needed for their activation.[48]

As argued above, the material conditions needed to perform *Ten Years Alive* go beyond what we traditionally understand that phrase to mean – beyond the need for a space, a given number of projectors, a group of performers, a long string instrument, and even the soundtrack of Conrad playing the violin. They are dependent on memories, on forms and ecologies of practice, that are much harder to maintain than a Roman vase. In this section, I will explore how the museum can conserve these elusive, even metaphorical gestures, and how it can act as a vehicle to maintain and trigger the creation of memory ecologies, which in turn can help sustain the practice of artworks such as *Ten Years Alive*.

I will start by summarising the aims and results of the experimental process developed by Tate in 2019 that attempted to create documentation that could make possible the transmission and activation of the artwork.[49] In analysing the results, I will argue that there are forms of transmission that rely on the maintenance of personal, physical and embodied relationships, some of which can be delegated to digital media. There are forms of interaction in our increasingly digitally mediated human society that have taken on characteristics of local or situated practices, and I argue that engaging with those digital communities might be a way for the museum to maintain ecologies of memory for this almost fifty-year-old artwork.[50]

In trying to investigate whether documentation would be enough to ensure the viability of future activations of *Ten Years Alive*, the project team and the time-based media team devised an experiment. It was designed to test Tate's ability to create a corpus of documentation for this work, and to then understand if the documentation would be enough in transmitting the performance to a new generation of performers. In the process, we created a new documentation model – a 'dossier for transmission' – that included audio-visual and written content aimed at creating a set of instructions and baseline information for the new performers.[51] As well as drawing on the network of people who were involved in making the previous activations of the artwork in order to write the material history of *Ten Years Alive*, it was also through the contributions of past performers that we were able to understand the patterns that were part of how the artwork was materialised over time, and to collect evidence on how the artwork had changed. In the process we were also hoping to trigger the memories of how to operate the artwork in multiple contexts, so that we could consolidate the network of experiences and anecdotes that somewhat sustained the memory of the artwork. To evaluate the documentation's capacity to transmit the artwork to people who had never performed it before, the Reshaping the Collectible project facilitated the activation of the work once again at Tate, this time at Tate Liverpool during the city's LightNight festival in May 2019.[52]

Past collaborators of Conrad, as well as curators and Tate staff, were all part of this 2019 activation of *Ten Years Alive*. Before the performance in Liverpool, it was quite clear to us that the biggest challenge in transmitting *Ten Years Alive* was not in understanding what the artwork was, but in imagining what could be without Conrad. The network of *Ten Years Alive* seemed naturally to have Conrad at its centre; he was one of the instigators of change in the work and the only person who had sanctioned major amendments to it, including the ones regarding its title and configuration. The artist was also one of the main aggregators of people around this work, as became clear through the interview process that we undertook in 2019. Our key concern at that time was to see if we could perform the artwork in ways that reflected its diversity and mutability, while also adding to the social network that had sustained *Ten Years Alive* until now.

This activation of *Ten Years Alive* allowed us to rehearse our expectations of the types of practices needed to create and sustain the ecologies of memory about the artwork. As highlighted above, two main aspects contributed to the sustainability of the material network of this work: the selection of a new generation of performers, and the prompts provided to those performers.

To bring on board the new generation of musicians for the activation in Liverpool, we knew we had to rely on local communities with whom neither the project team nor the time-based media team were acquainted. (This was not the case for the projectionist, Rob Kennedy, who has an ongoing relationship with the time-based media conservation team at Tate.) What characteristics did we have to look for in this hypothetical ensemble? In which ecologies of musical and film practice across Liverpool would we find these people who were to build their own body-archives of practice for this work?[53] As for the prompts provided to performers, the most prominent concern was how to fill the gap left by Conrad, who, as mentioned, had been essential in giving directions during rehearsals. Would the documentation we provided suffice? How could the ecologies of memory for this work be triggered in the future, when no one who has experienced the artwork performed by and with Conrad is here to tell their story? The following paragraphs will reflect on these questions through an analysis of some aspects of the 2019 performance.

Fig.7
New performers Emily Lansley (centre) and Catherine Landen (right) discussing the 'dossier for transmission' during rehearsals for the LightNight performance at Tate Liverpool, 2019
Photo: Roger Sinek

The new generation of performers, selected by the Liverpool-based musical producer Andrew Ellis, arrived at the Wolfson Gallery at Tate Liverpool two days before the LightNight performance was to take place. The next day, ahead of the public performance, they were going to perform the work to a select group of people who had performed it in the past: the long-time

collaborators of Conrad whom we came to call the 'transmitters'.[54] It was interesting to see the different levels of confidence with which the new generation of performers approached the 'dossier for transmission', which we had provided to them two weeks in advance (fig.7).[55] Catherine Landen, the violist, indicated that this was the first time she had to study and perform from a document of this kind. As a classically trained player, the local ecologies she usually navigated within were quite different. George Maund, the long string instrument player, was acquainted with minimalist music and its networks, having performed in a piece by Rhys Chatham in the past, and being in a two-man band where they played DIY instruments. Maund indicated he acquired his knowledge via his personal interest, which led him to look up this form of experimental music online, complemented by instances of formal training. Emily Lansley, the bass player, mentioned that her engagement with the documentation was rather limited; she had preferred to listen to the recording of the 2006 Dundee performance, which was in fact absent from our dossier.[56] Of all the new performers only the projectionist, Rob Kennedy, had seen the work performed by Conrad himself (the 2006 performance in Leeds), which meant that the group mostly relied on their backgrounds and on the dossier to understand what a piece performed by Conrad looked and sounded like.

The memory ecology of this work in 2019 comprised the past collaborators who contributed to our work by being interviewed and by acting as transmitters; the people working towards the conservation and acquisition of the work, including the staff at Tate Liverpool; the 'dossier for transmission' and all the other documentation that can be accessed (like the footage of the 2006 Dundee activation); and the local ecology of practices in Liverpool. Andrew Ellis was a central node in the network of new performers – the first generation who were to play *Ten Years Alive* without ever having performed it or known Conrad. Ellis relied on his knowledge of the Liverpool music scene, acting partially as the producer of this activation of the work. He effectively embodied a role that was first was enacted by Conrad's close collaborators and was then transferred to curators as the memory ecology of *Ten Years Alive* expanded alongside the will to reperform it. In this case, however, Ellis's role was prompted by Tate and the people working in the time-based media conservation and project teams. Also, his communication with the performers, as well as the transmission of an initial brief followed by the 'dossier for transmission', mostly happened digitally; in many ways, this speaks to the mediated society we currently live in, and can be seen across the various interactions between the musicians and the work.

An example of this is that fact that the interactions between the producer and the performers in the early stages of commissioning this new performance, as well as the first interactions between the performers and dossier, took place in digital environments and locations. Compared to the conditions of early activations of this work (1972, 1994, 1996), the activation in 2019 is a good example of what theorist of digital culture Felix Stadler has called 'the expansion of the social basis of cultural processes' through the evolution of the media landscape.[57] This expansion, according to Stadler, implies changes in, among other things, the labour market, cultural space and signification, and forms of interaction. In this case, this is apparent in the very first interaction of the new generation of performers with the Dundee performance, which was through a video that was posted on Vimeo and that served as a point

of reference for the performers.[58] Aside from being provided with a dossier of information that had been curated by Tate through the process of researching the material history of the work, the performers had digital access to several nodes of the memory ecology of *Ten Years Alive*, via an aggregation of individual and collective memories that were to be found online.

The relationship of these two forms of memory – individual and collective – and the many ways they are impacted by the abundant flux of information promoted via various media, has been referred to by media theorist Andrew Hoskins as the 'connective turn'.[59] By looking at the material history of *Ten Years Alive* we can see that many instances of the distribution of Conrad's work since the 2000s bear witness to some aspects of this connective turn, gaining relevance for the new generation of performers and impacting the ways in which the performance was activated at Tate Liverpool, first for a restricted group of people and then as a public performance.

Fig.8
Angharad Davies discussing her past experience of performing *Ten Years Alive* during the feedback session, Tate Liverpool, 2019
Photo: Roger Sinek

The experiment in Liverpool concluded with an activation of the work, and in the process it was also possible to witness the activation of some nodes of its ecology of memory. The feedback session that followed the restricted performance, which was seen and heard by Tate staff, two academics and the transmitters, brought new voices to the understanding of Conrad, his work

and *Ten Years Alive*. Instances of remembering and forgetting were coupled with passionate testimonies about the artwork and what it meant to this group of people. Peter Spence, the projectionist in the activation of the performance in Dundee in 2006, reflected on how much the whole process of being interviewed and participating in the 2019 activation of the work contributed to his own process of remembrance. Angharad Davies went back to her diaries from the time she started working with Conrad, reading passages that echoed her own and other people's practice and memory (fig.8). The memory of *Ten Years Alive* was recalled and produced when people started to rehearse their own stories from the perspective of others. These moments of communion added to a collective process of remembering the work, as a performance of the work itself.

The feedback session was also an opportunity to juxtapose experiences of play and performance, particularly between the new generation of performers and the transmitters. As the transmitters recalled moments of interaction with the work and with Conrad, the new generation of performers contributed to this making of memory by bringing in their recent experiences of studying and performing the work to the discussion around what *Ten Years Alive* could be. The session also worked as an initial moment of critical reflection and suggestions for revision, which the transmitters offered by drawing upon their lived experience of playing the piece. One aspect in need of revision was the volume of the long string instrument, which was deemed too loud and overpowering. Other aspects included the structure of the piece, the tuning, and the positioning of the projectors. This moment of reflection and revision was continued into the following day – the day of the public performance. In this second session, the transmitters and performers reflected on a dimension of memory that was not immediately present during the first feedback session: that of flesh memory.[60] This form of memory resides in bodies that engage in practices that are hard to describe and convey. This second reflection process led to a second moment of revision, where the limits and possibilities of the performative practice were explored and negotiated by these two groups of artists. One month after the activation of *Ten Years Alive* in Tate Liverpool, the new performers all reported that the feedback session followed by this moment of engagement with the transmitters was one of the most relevant moments in the transmission of the work, and had the most impact on how they performed the work during LightNight.

The process of uncovering the memories of *Ten Years Alive* led to a consolidation of the memories of the individuals that were part of its creation and activation and of the collective memory shared by them with a new generation of performers. It allowed the time-based media conservation team to revise the 'dossier for transmission', incorporating the feedback from all the participants, creating a partial score of the performance. It also led to the creation of new agents in the maintenance of the artwork's memory, effectively expanding the network of people who are able to remember and perform it. The public performance of *Ten Years Alive* during LightNight, a festival with a local audience, further multiplies the nodes in the ecology of memory of the work, both through the performance itself and through the documentation that was produced to disseminate it, such as marketing and interpretation materials. This process reveals three additional points about the conservation of an artwork like *Ten Years Alive*: first, that the material conditions for activating these practices rely on the distribution of knowledge

through people, documents, objects and structures, and their circulation through many contexts; second, that the production of knowledge is intrinsically associated with the local ecologies where the performance takes place, which makes the material conditions for the activation of the work somewhat site-specific; and third, that the preservation of that knowledge is dependent on the processes of memory creation and maintenance, which are developed through the interaction of individual and collective memories, triggered by humans and non-humans, with a reliance on digital modes of distribution.

This perspective troubles the idea of the museum as the place where artworks are collected and conserved. As demonstrated by the development of the memory ecologies of *Ten Years Alive*, the ownership of the work's practice is distributed by and among the many people and ecologies who hold the memories on how to perform it – as are the means to activate it. We will now look at what this means for the future conservation of the work, and the role of documentation in the maintenance of its memory.

4. ON TRANSMISSION: FROM DELEGATION TO THE DISTRIBUTION OF KNOWLEDGE

The conservation of artworks like *Ten Years Alive* needs to encompass forms of knowledge production that can be translated into written or audio-visual outputs, as well as those that are transmitted intergenerationally through bodies, affect and intimacy. Indeed, this is one of the main differences between conserving artworks like *Ten Years Alive* and conserving delegated performances. On the one hand, the process undertaken in Liverpool made visible the need to incorporate more information about the artist and his character into the dossier for transmission; on the other hand, it allowed the time-based media conservation team at Tate to understand the need to incorporate transmitters into each new activation of the work. These two strategies will directly impact the development of the ecology of memory of this work, which is dependent on moments of interaction as well as the circulation of both people and information.

Yet there are other aspects at play. In the case of delegated performances, with some notable exceptions, the knowledge needed to activate them belongs to the museum, which takes ownership of much of the process of memory creation and maintenance. In the case of *Ten Years Alive*, the memories that surround the making and activation of the work are essential to its transmission, and yet they do not, and cannot, belong to the museum. The need to rely on external networks to maintain the memory of the work raises questions that go far beyond conservation strategies and operations. If the distribution of knowledge and labour is an essential aspect of the sustainability of this ecology, what is the museum's responsibility towards (1) maintaining the memory ecologies of the work, (2) engaging ethically with its means of production, and (3) changing to adapt to a society and human condition that is increasingly digitally mediated? And how can the relationship between the museum and the other sources of knowledge-making be impacted by the changing digital landscape?

In discussing the characteristics of the 'digital condition' and how it impacts cultural production, Felix Stadler proposes 'communality' as one of the main features of this new way of being.[61]

This sense of communality is promoted by the creation of spaces for communication and interaction that trouble traditional notions of locality and placemaking, as well as expanding our understanding of site-specificity. The rise of online communities around specific interests or topics has been one of the most impactful culture-changing phenomena of the past twenty years, culminating in the influence of social media in elections, the dissemination of (mis)information, and the ways we consume culture online.[62] In discussing the impact of the 'connectivity turn' in the production of collective memory through archives, Andrew Hoskins suggests that the digital landscape problematises the idea of 'default communities',[63] 'afford[ing] a more visceral sense of the self as a node in media and thus in connective memory'.[64] The interaction with digital devices and the internet is evidently even more present since smartphones became themselves a form of prosthetic memory, one that affords the body the possibility to forget, or to transfer information to a memory device.[65] While the importance of social networks and the online archive to the creation and maintenance of memory ecologies of *Ten Years Alive* was made clear in the previous section, it is worth reiterating the impact of these resources on the learning process for the new generation of performers – something that will likely only grow with the development of further digital tools and the circulation of more information. In this sense, we could assume that (1) some forms of delegation are already happening through digital media (namely the immersion in and connection with communities of practice), and (2) other forms of delegation might appear in the future.

The idea of communality also has political repercussions that are important to relate back to the place of the museum and the practice of conservation. If the means of production are distributed by and within communities of practice, how much and what types of knowledge can the museum retain, and which can it promote? Two opposing political tendencies are identified by Stadler in his articulation of cultural production in a digital society: 'post-democracy' and 'commons'.[66] To use Stadler's words, post-democracy

> refers to strategies that counteract the enormously expanded capacity for social communication by disconnecting the possibility to participate in things from the ability to make decisions about them. Everyone is allowed to voice his or her opinion, but decisions are ultimately made by a select few. Even though growing numbers of people can and must take responsibility for their own activity, they are unable to influence the social conditions – the social texture – under which this activity has to take place.[67]

In this scenario, participation is hampered, as no deliberative action actually occurs outside a group of people who hold power over others.[68] In the specific case of the memory ecologies of *Ten Years Alive*, post-democracy can take on many forms, from engagement in extractive forms of interaction with the transmitters and the new generation of performances (to various degrees), to the consolidation of the activation of the artwork in ways that removes agency from future generations of performers.

Stadler's idea of the 'commons', on the other hand, 'denotes approaches for developing new and comprehensive institutions that not only directly combine participation and decision-making but also integrate economic, social, and ethical spheres – spheres that Modernity has

tended to keep apart.' [69] This is a pathway towards what the feminist scholar and activist Viv Golding calls the 'affective museum', a place for friendship and kinship, and for

> forging 'relation' and building true friendships, which are always located within a socio-political realm, where we come to know the 'other-within' in ways that determine our collective and individual humanity … Relation is deeper than engagement; it takes time and effort, inside and outside of the museum.[70]

In the case of Tate and, specifically, conservation, this would imply, for example, promoting forms of scrutiny through openness and transparency of processes and intentions; engaging in reciprocal exchanges with communities that contribute to the creation and maintenance of memory ecologies of artworks; fostering creativity in the uses of the collection; accepting uncertainty, ambiguity and failure; recognising the labour involved in conserving artworks and how it is distributed beyond the institution; promoting a space for difference, instead of assimilation;[71] and 'mak[ing] the institution a shared feminist "homespace", where minds, bodies and feelings are welcome and embodied knowledge(s) can be progressed.'[72]

Museums, and specifically their conservation departments, need to actively opt for one of these opposing tendencies and, in my view, only one guarantees the survival of these works through an ethical and responsible approach: that of the commons. This approach not only recognises the distribution of knowledge about the work, but also engages in a reflexive process that the feminist and new materialist scholar Rosi Bradiotti has called 'affirmative ethics'.[73] 'Affirmative ethics' is a way of recognising negative patterns in an institution or process, and affirming their existence together with a commitment to change. This process allows for a recognition of the need to change alongside the possibility of undertaking that change, while promoting collective acts of solidarity, vulnerability and compassion in actualising those possibilities. In Bradiotti's words,

> affirmative ethics consists not in denying negativity, but in reworking it outside the dialectical oppositions; … it is not about the avoidance of pain, but rather a different way of reworking it; … [It] aspires to an adequate understanding of the conditions of our relational dependency on the negative … in the active transformation of the negative in something else. Ethics is not just the application of moral protocols, norms and values, but rather the force that contributes to conditions of affirmative becoming.[74]

Affirmative ethics is therefore a framework that could allow us to move towards a model of 'commons' as highlighted above, making visible not only the models that work, but also the places where the trouble lies – where models do not work and where they go against the ethical commitments we are ready to undertake.[75]

Several steps towards the ideal of the 'commons' have already been taken by Tate – some of them even prior to the acquisition of *Ten Years Alive*. Those specifically relating to Conrad's work include the dossier for transmission, which was revised after the experiment at Tate Liverpool. The dossier currently includes footnotes and annotations that record processes of decision making and relevant sources, and the Reshaping the Collectible project has adopted a model of

contributorship, developed by Zoe Miller and Lucy Bayley, that recognises the specific contributions of everyone who has worked on the research and the writing of the dossier.[76] As mentioned above, we have also specified the need for the presence of at least one transmitter each time *Ten Years Alive* is to be shown, with the hope that new generations of performers will become transmitters in the future, renewing cycles of transmission globally, locally and intergenerationally. Finally, the processes of acquisition and conservation are being published as part of the present publication, adding another layer of transparency to museum activities that can otherwise be quite opaque to anyone outside Tate.

Despite these developments, there are many more steps that we ought to undertake in conservation, and many others as an institution. Although artworks and emerging forms of cultural production are pushing us towards distributed models of knowledge making and interaction, our processes are still designed to respond to a form of authority that resists diffraction and circulation.[77] While these ideologies exist across all museums, and in all departments, I can specifically speak to the processes in time-based media conservation at Tate, and to the case of *Ten Years Alive*. As an example, the acquisition of this work has demonstrated how, with few exceptions, we are still relying on modes of written documentation that reflect the needs of instruction-based works. These are written in language that aims to be neutral and objective, with little space for reflexive accounts. This way of working proved to be a challenge when we were trying to make sense of the many, and sometimes contradictory, voices that we wanted to make visible in the dossier for transmission for *Ten Years Alive*. There is a need, however, to maintain some sort of coherence across the documents produced by the institution, so that the models in use are understood by anyone who might come to them in the future.

Rethinking the models that we use has become one of the priorities of those involved in acquiring and conserving performance artworks at Tate, since a growing number of the works being collected purposefully defy forms of written knowledge and ideas. The models we have been using for instruction-based, delegated artworks also do not capture embodied knowledge, or recognise the holders of such knowledge, and this is something that the time-based media team is hoping to explore in the coming years. Other changes are dependent on the whole institution, which will have to rehearse ways of sharing information with communities of practice as well as undertake reciprocal and caring exchanges of information, bodily practice and affects in the public sphere.

These issues only scratch the surface, and I am sure that many more challenges will arise even as these are resolved. Looking at these concerns through the lens of affirmative ethics, we can say that the institution – like any structure or entity, human and non-human – is irremediably flawed. With this awareness comes the situated perspective of learning with the institution and the works we are collecting, and recognising these flaws as being full of generative power, full of the potential for change.

CONCLUSION

To return to where we started, we all know there are things that are not easy to describe. My experience working with what could be termed a social network of care in the conservation of *Ten Years Alive* is one of them. This artwork clearly prompts questions about who owns the knowledge about and within museum collections, and who has the right and the means to access it. In this paper, I have argued that *Ten Years Alive* challenges both conservation practice and the ethics of care, both from and for people. I have also demonstrated that opening up the museum as a repository, a producer, and a node in a network of knowledge not only contributes to creating, activating and fostering the memory ecologies of artworks outside of the boundaries of both the artwork and the museum, but also brings forward the possibility of forming new avenues for inclusive practice, making the museum space a home for many more people. In the final section of this paper, I have argued for the need to address change through a radical process of learning with and through the flaws of the institution. I am affirming the need to review our processes through our gaps, and the need to recognise the institution, our processes and our practices as forms of permanent becoming. I am also affirming the need for vulnerability and transparency, so that we can reach forms of communality that can allow a generation of new memories to be added to the already growing memory ecologies of artworks like *Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain*, in ways that effectively contribute to its long-term conservation.

NOTES

1. Andrew Hoskins, 'Memory Ecologies', *Memory Studies*, no.9, vol.3, 2016, pp.348–57; p.354.

2. This description of practice resonates with the notion put forward by philosopher Louis Althusser in his 1975 text 'What is Practice?', and with new materialist perspectives on practice seen in the writings of feminist theorist Karen Barad, among other authors. Althusser states that practice is 'a social process that puts agents into active contact with the real and produces results of social utility' (Louis Althusser, 'What is Practice?' [1975], in Marcus Boon and Gabriel Levine (eds.), *Practice*, London 2018, p.47), while Karen Barad's agential realism clarifies that agency includes people, as well as nature, objects and technology (which she calls 'non-human'). See Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Durham, North Carolina 2007.

3. Andrew Hoskins, 'Media, Memory, Metaphor: Remembering and the Connective Turn', *Parallax*, vol.17, no.4, 2011, p.19–31; p.24.

4. Hélia Marçal, 'Contemporary Art Conservation', published as part of the research project Reshaping the Collectible: When Artworks Live in the Museum, Tate, 2019, https://www.tate.org.uk/research/reshaping-the-collectible/research-approach-conservation, accessed 30 January 2021.

5. See Hoskins 2011.

6. The term 'affects' is drawn from philosophy; the use of the term in this text particularly relates to the writings of Baruch Spinoza, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, as well as that of more recent theorists such as Brian Massumi and Erin Manning. In this sense, affect is the reaction that is instigated through processes of interaction that create a difference of some kind from one moment to another. To use the words of Spinoza, it is the capacity to 'affect and be affected'. An example would be a bodily reaction that is processed through an encounter between an object and a person. For more on this see, for example, Brian Massumi, *Politics of Affect*, Cambridge 2015.

7. The disagreement over its chronology has much to do with the slippery definition of performance art as a genre. Art historian Amelia Jones defines the genre has having emerged during the 1950s. See Amelia Jones, 'Timeline of Ideas: Live Art in (Art) History, A Primarily European-US-based Trajectory of Debates and Exhibitions Relating to Performance Documentation and Re-Enactments', in Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield (eds.), *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, New York 2012, pp.425–34.

8. Roselee Goldberg, *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present* [1979], London and New York 2011.

9. 9 Ibid.

10. See, for example, Amelia Jones, 'The Now and the Has Been: Paradoxes of Live Art in History', in Jones and Heathfield 2012, pp. 9–26.

11. See, for example, Goldberg 2011 and Jones, 'The Now and the Has Been' 2012.

12. This notion resonates with philosopher Jacques Derrida's sense of the word 'presence', characterised as 'being there'. See Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye and Michael Shanks, 'Introduction: Archaeologies of Presence', in Giannachi, Kaye and Shanks (eds.), *Archaeologies of Presence: Art, Performance and the Persistence of Being*, Oxford and New York 2012.

13. Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, London and New York 2003.

14. First collected as an assembly of material remains and, more recently, as live events, performance art has changed the ways in which artworks are acquired and cared for. See Teresa Calonje, 'Introduction', in Teresa Calonje (ed.), *Live Forever: Collecting Live Art*, London 2015, pp.11–26.

15. Ibid. The first performance artwork acquired by Tate was Roman Ondák, *Good Feelings in Good Times* 2003.

16. Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, London 2012, p.219.

17. There are clearly notable exceptions to this trend, including Fluxus events. The chronology gathered by Amelia Jones offers some examples of works that fall outside of this characterisation. See Jones, 'Timeline of Ideas' 2012.

18. The Performance Specification and guidelines on its use can be found in Louise Lawson, Acatia Finbow and Hélia Marçal, 'Documentation Tool: Performance Specification', Tate website, undated, https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/projects/documentation-conservation-performance/performance-specification, accessed 13 August 2021. For more on the strategy used to document performance art at Tate see Louise Lawson, Acatia Finbow and Hélia Marçal, 'Developing a Strategy for the Conservation of Performance-Based Artworks at Tate', *Journal of the Institute of Conservation*, vol.42, no.2, 2019, pp.114–34.

19. Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, New York 2004.

20. An account of the process of acquiring this work can be found in Louise Lawson, Hélia Marçal, Ana Ribeiro and Stephen Huyton, 'Institutional Practices: Collecting Performance Art at Tate', in *Reshaping the Collectible: Tony Conrad, Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain*, Tate Research Publication, 2021, [LINK to follow].

21. This activation of the work was titled *Fifty-Five Years Alive on the Infinite Plain*. In 2007 Conrad decided that *Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain* would thereafter be titled *X Years Alive on the Infinite Plain*, with '*X*' changed with each activation to represent the number of years since his experiments first started, which was 1962.

22. Tony Conrad and Brian Duguid, 'Tony Conrad Interview', *EST Magazine*, 1996, http://media.hyperreal.org/zines/est/intervs/conrad.html, accessed 9 July 2020.

23. The original audio files and unpublished transcripts of these interviews are held in the Tate Research files for the Reshaping the Collectible project.

24. For more on this see Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*, Oxford 1994.

25. Although this is the norm, it is not always the case. Thank you to Kit Webb for pointing this nuance out to me, and for suggesting the book by Erika Balsom, *After Uniqueness: A History of Film and Video Art in Circulation*, New York 2017.

26. For more on material histories, see Hélia Marçal, 'Documentation Tool: Material History', Tate website, undated, https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/projects/documentation-conservation-performance/material-history, accessed 8 July 2021.

27. As researcher and curator Teresa Calonje asks: '[W]hat is actually being passed on? Where is the space for that which escapes control, that is beyond the technical? What remains of the other silent layer, of what can't be seen? …[S]o much in live art is about the intangible, the personalities, the feelings, uncertainties and unanswered questions, so how can that be re-presented?'. Calonje 2015, p.22.

28. These characteristics are in line with what the sociologist Fernando Domínguez Rubio has called 'docile objects'. In opposition to 'unruly objects', which destabilise the boundaries of the museum, 'docile objects' tend to behave according to what the museum expects of them. Although performance art can hardly be described as docile, delegated performance can indeed be considered less unruly than other forms within the spectrum of performance art practices. See Fernando Domínguez Rubio, 'Preserving the Unpreservable: Docile and Unruly Objects at MoMA', *Theory and Society*, vol.43, no.6, August 2014, pp.617–45, https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9qr4d9qx, accessed 8 July 2021.

29. A perspective on the history of the work can be found in Lucy Bayley, '"Yes, But How Can It Be Live and Collectible?" Tony Conrad's *Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain* 1972', in *Reshaping the Collectible: Tony Conrad* 2021, [LINK]. While Bayley addresses the broader history of *Ten Years Alive*, the present paper is particularly concerned with the ways in which the life of the work reveals an expansion of the ecologies of memory surrounding it.

30. David Grubbs, videoconference with Kit Webb and Hélia Marçal, 1 August 2019, Tate Research file.

31. For more on this see Bayley 2021.

32. Grubbs 2019. According to Grubbs, 'Table of the Elements did have such a groundswell of reputation, you know, small and growing, but I think for the people who were interested in that kind of music, the idea of being able to see Tony Conrad and Keiji Haino and Bruce Gilbert and all of these people, John Fahey, together over three nights, I think a lot of people did travel to Chicago for that … As I say, it's a relatively small sphere, but it did seem like a culmination of a lot of the work that Table of the Elements had done and you were really, by that time, beginning to feel the groundswell of interest in Tony's music, that had been steadily building for about two years at that point. I think the 'Early Minimalism' boxset comes out not long after that … and received tremendous press. That's the first time, at least in the US, you saw the *New York Times* and *Artforum* and places like that writing about Tony through the context of the dispute with La Monte Young over the tapes. It's the first time that the *New York Times*, for example, is writing about Tony as essential to the amplified drone that you would hear in La Monte Young's music, but also in the Velvet Underground's music.'

33. This event took place on 13 October 2007 at BOZAR, the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels, and was called *Forty-Five Years on the Infinite Plain*; see note 21. It was co-curated by María Palacios Cruz and Xavier García Bardón.

34. The festival took place on 10–26 September 2004 at the Dortmund Phoenixhalle.

35. María Palacios Cruz, in-person communication with Pip Laurenson, Kit Webb, Lucy Bayley and Hélia Marçal, LUX, London, 7 August 2019, Tate Research file.

36. A copy of the DVD was shown to Reshaping the Collectible researchers Lucy Bayley and Hélia Marçal by curator and writer Mark Webber. Mark Webber, in-person communication with Lucy Bayley and Hélia Marçal,

8 March 2019, Tate Research file.

37. Andrea Lissoni, in-person communication with Lucy Bayley and Hélia Marçal, 13 May 2019, Tate Research file. On the changes to the titling of *Ten Years Alive*, see note 21.

38. This was mentioned by María Palacios Cruz, David Grubbs and Mark Webber; see Palacios Cruz 2019; Grubbs 2019; and Webber 2019.

39. The work was show as part of the EVOLUTION 2006 festival at Leeds City Art Gallery, Leeds.

40. Peter Spence, in-person communication with Kit Webb, Ana Ribeiro and Hélia Marçal, 26 April 2019, Tate Research file.

41. Ibid.

42. Palacios Cruz 2019.

43. Grubbs 2019.

44. Palacios Cruz 2019.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. See, for example, Graham Black, 'Museums, Memory and History', *Cultural and Social History*, vol.8, no.3, pp.415–27, 2011.

48. See, for example, Lawson, Finbow and Marçal 2019.

49. A description of and reflection on this experiment can be found in Louise Lawson, Ana Ribeiro and Hélia Marçal, 'Experimenting with Transmission', in *Reshaping the Collectible: Tony Conrad* 2021, [LINK].

50. Many texts have been written on the topic of digital mediation. Two that were particularly influential in the writing of this essay are Felix Stadler, *The Digital Condition*, Cambridge 2018; and Nick Couldry and Andreas Hepp, *The Mediated Construction of Reality*, Cambridge 2016.

51. The written parts of the 'dossier for transmission' are available to download in Word/PDF form using the following links: Part 1: Performance Specification; Part 2: Guidelines for Projectionists; Part 3: Guidelines for Musicians; Part 4: Guidelines for Sound Engineers. These documents represent the latest version of the dossier, which was updated in 2021 for a new loan of the work. All changes and updates made since the dossier was created in 2019 are recorded in the footnotes in each document.

52. For more on the LightNight Festival in Liverpool see https://lightnightliverpool.co.uk, accessed 9 July 2020. The theme of the 2019 LightNight was 'Ritual'. More information on the 2019 edition in particular can be found at https://lightnightliverpool.co.uk/watch-the-film, accessed 8 July 2021.

53. The notion of the body-archive was coined in the field of performance studies by the scholar André Lepecki. For more on this see André Lepecki, 'The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dances', *Dance Research Journal*, vol.42, no.2, 2010, pp.28–48.

54. The name 'transmitters' was coined by the project team, led by Pip Laurenson. This concept was at the core of the development of the methodology that is outlined in Lawson, Ribeiro and Marçal 2021.

55. For more on this see ibid.

56. The work was shown in the context of the festival Kill Your Timid Notion 06, which took place on 17–19 February 2006 at DCA, Dundee.

57. Stadler 2018, p.5.

58. The video of the Dundee event, as well as photographs and a description, are available at 'Angharad Davies, Mark Wastell, Nikos Veliotis and Tony Conrad: Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plane', event page, Arika,

Edinburgh, 2006, https://arika.org.uk/archive/items/kill-your-timid-notion-06/ten-years-alive-infinite-plane, accessed 13 August 2021.

59. Hoskins 2011.

60. The term 'flesh memory' was coined in the field of performance studies by the scholar Rebecca Schneider in a paper titled 'Flesh Memory and the Logic of the Archive; or, Driving the Lincoln', which she delivered at the Australasian Drama Studies Association Meetings in Newcastle, New South Wales in 2000. She later expanded on it in her book *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, London and New York 2011.

61. Stadler 2018.

62. Stadler further proposes that the digital condition of social interactions has caused a growth of the knowledge economy, problematising traditional forms of labour. Ibid.

63. Hoskins borrows the term 'default communities' from media theorist Wolfgang Ernst's 'The Archive as Metaphor', *Open*, no.7, pp.46–53, 2004. He draws on Ernst's view of the internet as an 'internationalised' community to make a point about the communality that emerges from forms of online interaction. See Hoskins 2011.

64. Hoskins 2011, p.25.

65. Landsberg 2004.

66. Stadler 2018.

67. Ibid., p.6.

68. The term 'deliberative actions' and its association with a Marxist ethics of participation was developed by the scholar Nancy Fraser in her essay 'From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a "Post-Socialist" Age', *New Left Review*, vol.212, July–August 1995, pp.68–93.

69. Stadler 2018, p.6.

70. Viv Golding, 'Feminism and the Politics of Friendship in the Activist Museum', in Robert R. James and Richard Sandell (eds.), *Museum Activism*, London and New York 2019, pp.127–36; p.128. See also Viv Golding, 'Museums, Poetics, Affect', *Feminist Review*, vol.104, no.1, 2013, pp.80–99.

71. Golding 2019. See also Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Abingdon 2004; and Hélia Marçal, 'Becoming Difference: On the Ethics of Conserving the In-Between', *Studies in Conservation*, 12 July 2021, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00393630.2021.1947074, accessed 19 August 2021.

72. Golding 2019, p.130. The use of the term 'knowledges' was coined by the feminist scholar Donna Haraway in 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies*, vol.14, no.3, 1988, pp.575–99.

73. See Rosi Braidotti, *Posthuman Knowledge*, Cambridge 2019.

74. Ibid., unpaginated.

75. See Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Durham, North Carolina 2016.

76. To access the dossier and its annotations, follow the links cited in note 51. Bayley is a researcher on the Reshaping the Collectible project team; Miller is an early career researcher undertaking her doctoral research project at Tate and Maastricht University, as part of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Network organised by NACCA (New Approaches in the Conservation of Contemporary Art); see http://nacca.eu/research-projects/ownership-information-control-access, accessed 25 May 2021. The model draws on contributorship studies in scientific research to find ways to recognise every form of labour that is

involved in producing research that is (by design) necessarily collaborative. [ADD REF TO Zoe and Lucy's contributorship article, forthcoming].

77. The term 'diffraction' was coined by Donna Haraway and is used extensively by Karen Barad as a method to reduce exclusivity in forms of knowledge-making. See Barad 2007.

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