

Object—  
Event—  
Performance:  
Art, Materiality,  
and Continuity  
Since the 1960s

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Edited by Hanna B. Hölling

# Object—Event—Performance

Art, Materiality, and Continuity  
since the 1960s

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Bard Graduate Center

*New York City*

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# Introduction: Object—Event—Performance

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Hanna B. Hölling

It matters what ideas we use to think other ideas (with) . . .  
it matters what matters we use to study other matters with; it mat-  
ters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what  
knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts.

—Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*

In the 1960s, the art world and its objects began to experience a dramatic shift in what and how art can be. New modes of artistic expression—happenings, performance, video, experimental film, Fluxus activities, and the emerging practices of media art—questioned the idea of art as a static object that endures unchanged and might thus be subject to a single interpretation. In contrast to traditional visual arts, the blending of genres and media began to transform not only curatorial and museum collecting practices but also the traditional function and mandate of conservation, which became augmented to accept the inherent dynamism and changeability of artworks.

How do these artworks endure over time despite their material and conceptual changes? How do their identities unfold in relation to ruling knowledge, values, politics, and culture? *Object—Event—Performance: Art, Materiality, and Continuity since the 1960s* examines the physical and im-material aspects of artworks at the intersection of art history with theory,

material culture studies, and conservation, focusing on artworks that evade the familiar physical stability of such traditional works as painting or sculpture, which are often conceived in a single medium and meant to last “forever.” Intrinsically changeable and often of short duration, these “unstable” artworks challenge art, conservation, and museological discourses. Not only do they test standard assumptions of what, how, and when an artwork is or can be; they also put forward the notion of materiality in the constant flux that plays a significant role in the creation and mediation of meaning.

This book builds on two strands that pervade current thinking about the material lives of artworks created in the second half of the twentieth century. It rests, first, on the premise that artworks such as installations, performances, events, videos, films, earthworks, and forms of intermedia involving interactive and networked components pose particular questions when it comes to defining what (and how) exactly the work *is*, both physically and conceptually, and what should be preserved. Second, this volume revisits the traditional notions of conservation and collecting practices, particularly in museums, that are built on a conception of static, fixed, inactive, and immobile artifacts, with the ambition to shed some light on the novel thinking developed in these fields.

Conceived at the intersection of disciplinary approaches, *Object—Event—Performance* advances a way of thinking about the materiality of artworks and artifacts as they are created, distributed, presented, manipulated, and safeguarded, and as they end their lives, expired, discarded, or forgotten. The book engages with material embodiments too often overlooked by visual and art historical studies, focusing on the roles a work’s bodily dimension and mediality play in the ways it communicates meaning. The lens of conservation offers a particularly compelling starting point for the development of material-oriented and material-inspired thinking because conservation first and foremost strives to understand what the work is, in and beyond the work’s specific historical moment.<sup>1</sup> In an attempt to grasp the work’s identity, the act of conservation implements the discursive potentialities created by communities of practice—that is, actors who share common interests while participating in conservation—including, but not exclusive to, conservators, with their objects, tools, and techniques at hand and within the cultural, social, political, and economic contexts in which they perform.

Paradoxically, however, conservation is anything but neutral. The activities meant to prolong an artwork’s life into the future also affect its identity. Any attempt to perpetuate an artwork also irrevocably changes

it. From another perspective, conservation is affected by its very objects, tools, and techniques and is continuously adapting to the demands of contemporaneity, the reality of artworks, and the novelty of artistic genres. With varying results, conservation attempts to keep up with intellectual, technological, and scientific developments and to assimilate institutional and noninstitutional cultures.

Conservation is a knowledge-generating activity; it is a dynamic, creative, and reflexive practice. In creating knowledge, conservation is never impartial, objective, and general but rather relational, establishing connections between objects and subjects and contingent on the predominant cultural, economic, and political perspectives in a given moment. Untangling conservation's past and present may teach us something about the conditions in which the events of conservation interventions took place and about the constituents of the "conservation object." Because every act of perpetuation and conservation presupposes a certain understanding of what the work is (or implies a certain "experimental system," to use terminology familiar to the historians of science<sup>2</sup>), we may scrutinize conservation and its components—conservation objects, techniques, methods, approaches, residues, and traces left behind—as an autoarchaeological exercise (an archaeology of the recent or contemporary past)<sup>3</sup>—to detect the orders and the "historical a priori," in Michel Foucault's terms,<sup>4</sup> that have allowed certain actions to be performed while repressing others.

Although the contributors hope to see this book in the hands of conservation experts, neither is this a book about conservation nor is it meant only for a conservation readership. For the sake of nonconservators who are interested in the material lives of artworks, this book deliberately avoids technical jargon. The conception of conservation as a participative practice and epistemic—that is, knowledge-generating—activity put forward in this book encompasses many cultures and understandings of what it means to conserve.<sup>5</sup> Cultures of conservation imply a set of social practices characterized by shared values, conventions, attitudes, goals, and patterns of human knowledge, as well as beliefs and behaviors that depend on the capacity to learn and transmit knowledge to succeeding generations. The formation of these cultures applies not only to such aspects of contemporaneity as the continuance of medium-, network-, and institution-specific cultures of care but also to their historical evolution through restoration, rehabilitation, renewal, and revival. Conservation not only acts within but is also enacted outside its "safe spaces"—analytical laboratories, heritage institutions, and museum



departments—just as conservation thinking persists in other domains, in minds, hands, and practices, from curatorial, archival, and registrial to artistic. These cultures and understandings of conservation, including highly specialized conservation scholarship, are contingent on the subjective viewpoints and situated knowledge of the actor-participants in conservation, which are in turn determined by the conditions in which this knowledge is produced.<sup>6</sup>

The encounters with the materiality of artworks in this book originate from the authors' interest in the conditions that determine an artwork's ongoing life. They emphasize the importance of conservation thinking—and thinking *about* conservation—and explore how these factors enrich, shape, and help reformulate theoretical and historical discourses. Thus, what follows spans active learning from the past, acting in the present, and glimpses of the future. The already well-established turn toward materials and materialities in recent decades is refocused *through* and *as* a conservation question. We aim to attract many other voices and responses that will continue to expand discursive frameworks and challenge established disciplinary boundaries.<sup>7</sup> *Object—Event—Performance* combines the perspectives of historians of art, media, performance, and conservation as well as artists, scholars, and professionals working in media and curatorial fields that are devoted to the material and conceptual lives of artworks. Their essays reflect on the ways in which artworks created since the 1960s are conserved, perpetuated, presented, and conceptualized, each from a particular perspective. This volume is based on the belief that cross-pollination among disciplines and professions generates new perspectives on art and its world as well as novel encounters with the ever-changing materiality of artworks.<sup>8</sup> The essays expose the entangled material, spatial, and temporal relationships in which artworks exist. I am convinced that a meaningful dialogue can only take place where professional fields and academic disciplines intersect. This project has been developed at these junctures. But in addition to placing conservation questions in dialogue with humanities disciplines,<sup>9</sup> the contributions to this volume attempt to acknowledge conservation as a valid theoretical and disciplinary framework that can be accessed and operated not only by conservators but also by nonconservators. Crucially, this book allows the participants in conservation *and* nonconservators to take a stand.

Questions that emerged during the symposium and were taken up by the authors include the following: How do works of art transition over

time as they are impacted by the processes of institutionalizing, presenting, archiving, and conserving artworks and artifacts? How have new artistic practices since the 1960s affected the way in which we think about artworks? What does it mean to conserve, document, and archive new art? Can traditional conservation be sustained? How can it be adapted to the changing character of the conservation object? How do curatorial approaches and methods of documenting and distributing artworks affect their identity? What is the relation between a work and its score, instruction, or notation? What role do these considerations play in the work's material and conceptual continuity? Where does the archive begin and end? How does it relate to the artwork that it archives? How does one make sense of the archival preservation of the artwork's traces, props, and leftovers? Where should the new media be placed in relation to the singularity and uniqueness of traditional objects? Last but not least, what is the artwork's relation to time? Can artworks be conceived of as events, performances, and processes? What consequences would such conception have for their perpetuation?

All in all, the authors in this volume offer approaches to answering these and related questions that allow us to begin formulating a theory of art and material culture that focuses on the changing materiality of works of art, a theory that will develop out of a slow analysis—or “condition reporting” of sorts—that works toward a deep awareness of their conceptual and physical frangibility, one that reveals the inner structure of things, their material flows and dynamics, and most important, one that enhances material knowledge.

### **Beyond the Object Principle: Event, Performance, Process**

The short-lived artworks in the post-1960s moment generated a radical move away from the assurance of material continuation. Rather than existing through time in one individual manifestation, artworks began to be associated with actions, performances, happenings, and events. They began to appear and disappear; they were performed, reperformed, and played back; they were installed, dismantled, and reinstalled. Referring to artworks emerging in the 1960s, art theorist and psychologist Friedrich Wolfram Heubach declared: “‘Art’ is an artwork not as long as it endures, but when it happens.”<sup>10</sup> Similarly, critic Harold Rosenberg believed that a painting is an event that results in the physical evidence of a completed set of actions.<sup>11</sup> This turn away from “thingness” to painting as an act

or as the action required to perform it allowed painting to become “an arena of activity and performance.”<sup>12</sup> Painting as an action supplanted paintings as things. The concept of the activity or agency of a mobilized artwork generates additional questions: Can an artwork’s “working” extend beyond its agency as a completed object and continue as the artwork transitions? Can impermanence become the only “permanent state” in such a transitory artwork? Does the traditional binary between objects and events, between stasis and action, become irrelevant? And last but not least, can conservation shift focus from the effect of artistic performance—the results of either the act of making or performing—to the performance itself?

The conceptualization of artworks and artifacts and their continuity spans disciplines such as performance and dance theory, art history, new approaches to materialism (for instance, Jane Bennett’s vital materialism and Karen Barad’s agential materialism<sup>13</sup>), philosophical aesthetics, and conservation. The following is a brief walk through some of these concepts and how they bear on the triumvirate of this book’s title—object, event, performance. Durational art forms require, first and foremost, engaging with temporality. Beginning in the late 1950s and early 1960s, performances, events, and processes have radicalized and complicated familiar perceptions of time in artistic practice. In the art historical and performance studies that preceded conservation studies, notions of change, temporality, and duration began to be applied to short-lived, performed, and processual artworks. These studies also challenged the idea that a work of art can be confined to one particular, enduring materiality determined by its physical components. As Heubach’s account suggests, the correlations between objects and events were particularly pertinent in theoretical discussions that emerged during these years. George Brecht, a chemist who became one of the most influential Fluxus artists and the progenitor of Fluxus events, recognized the interrelatedness of objects and events: “Every object is an event, and every event has an object-like quality. . . . So they’re pretty much interchangeable.”<sup>14</sup>

From a philosophical—or, more precisely, an ontological—standpoint, objects, events, and performances occur on a temporal continuum. One of its ends is occupied by objects, the other by events. Analytic philosophers refer to objects as “continuants” and events as “occurrents.”<sup>15</sup> Objects that persist by enduring (in other words, they have no temporal components) are continuants, whereas events and processes are not. Put simply, continuants continue, while occurrents occur. Within the domain of visual arts, works of art such as traditional painting,

sculpture, print, and other artifacts of material culture that endure in a certain material form over a long period are continuants. Dynamic, unstable, changeable, and repeatable works that engender multiple physical manifestations and consist of multiple temporal, perceivable parts are occurrents.

Although generally helpful, this distinction is not without problems. Philosophers contest whether continuants are metaphysically kosher. While the concept might exist loosely and popularly, continuants do have temporal and spatial parts and extend in time. Change, for instance, seems to be one of the most problematic issues about continuants. Change already presumes the existence of a work's temporal parts: the changing object, what it changes from, and what it changes to. Even the commonsense, dull occurrents, those that initially seem fixed or solid, such as stone or wood, are constituted by dynamic exchanges within their electrons that aim to form bonds between atoms.<sup>16</sup>

Works of art extend both spatially and temporarily, thus forming temporal constellations in relation to the space they occupy and the idiom in which they are conceptualized. Michelangelo's *David*, perhaps one of the most prominent pieces of rock extracted from Tuscany's Carrara quarries, might seem to endure in a certain physical form. Yet the sculpture displays the same dynamic of atomic events that holds rocks in bonds of charged particles. Observed with an unarmed eye but over a long duration, *David* appears as a slow performance, moving through time, changing. Change in *David* is slower than in other works, compared, for instance, to the infamous example of Dieter Roth's deliberately decaying chocolate gnomes, Hannah Wilke's manifestly disintegrating latex sculpture, Land artworks affected by environmental factors, even Simone Forti's little onion. In these works, change is more intense and their performance more compressed in time. From a temporal perspective, there is no strict difference between a traditional, seemingly stable painting and an unstable performance, because all works of art are intrinsically temporal in relation to the changes they undergo. At times, change is slow (*David*), at times more rapid (an onion, a latex sculpture, a jetty on the shore of the Great Salt Lake, a chocolate gnome). Some works actively respond to time (those that require reinstallation, often with new components); others respond to time passively (those that are contained in a singular, physical manifestation).<sup>17</sup> While Richard Tuttle's subtle, postminimal, intimate works can be placed in the slow, passive category, the changeability of Nam June Paik's works—their metamorphosis from satellite broadcast to video walls to installations and to single-channel

videos—provide an extreme example of the category that actively responds to time. To return to and expand on Brecht’s assertion about the interchangeability of object and event in relation to these considerations, an object might be seen as a slow event, whereas an event might be seen as a quickly happening object.<sup>18</sup> From this perspective, materiality becomes temporal as it unfolds in time. In fact, it is possible to argue that to understand the materiality of changeable works is to experience them in their changing quality, over a long duration.

The triumvirate of this book’s title does not, however, do away with the object entirely. In addition to its being unavoidable in art historical and conservation narrative,<sup>19</sup> it has also played a critical role in recent philosophical trends committed to realism and nonanthropogenic thinking (for instance, Graham Harman’s object-oriented ontology and Timothy Morton’s hyperobjects).<sup>20</sup> *Object—Event—Performance*, however, wishes to put forward a more nuanced grasp of the object in relation to its changeability and temporal duration, the opposite of stasis and fixity. In other words, in its dynamic and processual materiality,<sup>21</sup> the “object” is thought of in relation to and within a greater material universe that surrounds it and that it co-constitutes. It is also a cosmos of the internal relations of the object’s constitutive parts, convincingly discussed in Barad’s account of agential realism, in which material relations rather than objects become agents themselves. This is another instance in which the situatedness of the position from which an analysis is undertaken determines which investigative lens we adopt.

The following sections return to the notion of the object to address the intricacies of the object of conservation with the premise that the notions of performance and event are not a subsidiary aspect of objecthood nor is the “object” privileged as a category or principle. The term “object” has been associated with ideas of stasis and fixity in traditional approaches to conservation. The object of conservation, however, also becomes an “epistemic object” as a result of material and technological practices that generate and assure continuity. For historians of science, epistemic objects are subject to continuous evolution, marked by an infinite potential.<sup>22</sup> As an epistemic object, the conservation object has the capacity to continually acquire new properties and modify itself. Thus, these objects can never be fully themselves. Indeed, objects about which knowledge can never be fully attained are not objects but rather processes unfolding and changing in time.<sup>23</sup>

## Changeability

Changeability—the capacity of an artwork to change or to be changed as one of its fundamental characteristics—is an index of time. Change is also a movement from one state of matter to another, which involves a present moment from which the degree of change is assessed. Both the modernist tradition and the conservation of traditional art forms presume the presence of an unchanging, unique, and authentic object, defined in a single medium and embodying an intention. Changeability not only complicates an understanding of the term “authenticity” in the field of conservation but also runs counter to the idea of a work of art as a time-tested masterpiece. With its goal of rendering objects stable, traditional conservation treats change as a negative force to be arrested and/or concealed. The works that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century radically challenged how we think of change. It is no longer unacceptable or undesirable but rather an intrinsic trait of artworks. While a change in traditional artworks is a matter of damage or loss, change in the works produced since the 1960s is fundamental to their identity.

In fact, artworks transform from one condition to another in a variety of ways, whether through decay, alteration, or technological obsolescence.<sup>24</sup> Change is also intrinsic to score-based artworks, for which instructions define their potential for change, as is the case with dance, choreography, action pieces, and new media.<sup>25</sup> Change may be triggered by the interrelatedness of work and space, including environmental factors, alteration of natural surroundings and internal dependencies inherent to the system in which the work exists.<sup>26</sup> Finally, change is an effect of manipulation during dissemination, exhibition, and conservation, because no work is immune to these factors.<sup>27</sup> Change may go so far as to transgress the limits of acceptability when an artwork is re-mediated (translated into a different medium) or exhibited as a fragment.<sup>28</sup> A work may be conceived of as open, materializing in different forms or performed by different organic or mechanical bodies. Change, however, is not always intrinsic. A conservator’s or curator’s intervention or the replacement of mechanical components after a work has been vandalized, with or without the artist’s sanctioning the alteration, is an extrinsic change. Conservators and curators participate in both categories of change, allowing or limiting it, taking responsibility for deciding what kind of change is permissible for an artwork and what kind of change transgresses the limits of its identity.<sup>29</sup> The case of an artwork declared dead is an extreme instance of the impact of such decisions on the material future of the work.<sup>30</sup>

### Notations, Instructions, Scores

If, instead of existing in a permanent state, post-1960s artworks can exist in iterations or be reinstated or reperformed, a notation, instruction, or score may stabilize the otherwise fleeting event. The presence of a notation, instruction, or score not only ensures the work's return but also stands in for the work during the intervals between its reinstatements. Unlike works that endure in a singular material form, "occurrent" works are likely to produce substantial notational records, whether stemming from the artist or not, whether at the time the work is created or later.

A notation, which can be devised to transcend the limitations of time, requires establishing a difference between continuing and contingent elements of the work. To be sure, whether a work is amenable to notation impacts its dissemination. The more open the work is to notation, the more vitality it gains.<sup>31</sup> But there are limits to permissible variations within a work that determine whether it can still be regarded as the same. Scores and notations are not always produced before the event that actualizes them. Scores for Fluxus events are often produced after the event has been completed. As a sort of immortalizing gesture, they guarantee their repeatability. Julia Robinson points out that in some cases George Brecht's scores "would arise out of the creation of [an] object, while in others the object was discovered and Brecht subsequently wrote a score for it."<sup>32</sup> Alison Higgins and Alison Knowles's crafted score (chapter 1) is open to future realizations, while for Hannah B D'Amato (chapter 5) the score is productively unstable, a valid manifestation of creative practice. Simone Forti's performed dance reports and "constructions" (chapter 6) at times fall between an instruction for a work's future manifestation and a description of the past events. Scores also play a role in the perpetuation of new media works (chapter 9), whether statements, codes, key concepts, a record of an artist's intent, an instruction for participants, software coding, or a service design.<sup>33</sup> Franz Erhard Walther's work reminds us that notation does not need to precede the work but can be emergent from it (chapter 2).

Conservation plays a role as well in producing instructions or notations as a documentary record. By producing documentation for a work, conservators not only routinely interpret but also formulate (and reformulate) instructions that serve the work's future actualizations. In the moment of a work's installation or enactment, the firsthand experience of artists, collaborators, and assistants, and their tacit knowledge and memory provide the basis for and shape the initial

recording of instructions. The conservator's reformulation of those instructions in conservation narratives is necessarily secondhand.<sup>34</sup> Placed in and drawn from an archive that contains all known information about an artwork, the instructions can shape subsequent materializations of the work, which may in turn produce further instructions that reenter and enhance the archive.

Because notations and scores form the basis of Western notated music, musical analogies come in handy for illustrating iterant works. Rather than thinking about the conservation of material objects, a work that is reinstated can be thought of as following a script or score and an expressive rather than a nominal conception of authenticity.<sup>35</sup> Nominal authenticity relies on empirical facts associated with an artwork's origins and the history of its production, whereas expressive authenticity concerns the quality of interpretation, following a set of instructions while also remaining faithful to the individual performer's understanding of the piece.<sup>36</sup> Whether using historical or new instrumentation (bodies, apparatuses, objects, hardware), the genuineness of the work is guaranteed through instances that follow a script, even though they may vary in correctness and quality.<sup>37</sup> This view allows us to distance ourselves from the delimiting notions of material authenticity, originality, and uniqueness that for decades have been associated with traditional conservation and from the idea that an object must persist in a single, defined material form.<sup>38</sup>

### **Temporal Tethering**

Works can be tethered and untethered not only to a specific materiality but also to a particular temporality. Just as works are characterized by duration, they may also change in pace, degree, and intensity as well as in the length of their duration, their chronicity. The notions of "autochronicity" and "allochronicity" are useful not only in allowing works to be located outside the event-object binary but also in shedding some light on how we perceive them as being in time.<sup>39</sup> The terms "autochronicity" and "allochronicity" recall Goodman's distinction between forgeable/autographic and unforgeable/allographic art—the first tied to specific time and hands (in their production), the second existing in a potentially infinite number of instantiations. Allographic art is often characterized by short duration; autographic, by long duration. Thus, allochronic artworks, untethered to a specific temporality, are reperformable, while autochronic artworks have a specific and fixed



relation to time. Autochronic works have traditionally been treated as long-duration, quasi-stable objects, with determinable, often singular origins. They are usually produced by an individual author and are tied to a single moment in time. Allochronic works may reoccur in different manifestations. For their realization, they require not only instructions but also a collaborative effort and a larger network of actants, at times including active audiences.<sup>40</sup> Examples of such works are performances and events, video installations, and some of the new media that will be discussed in the pages that follow.

Autochronic works also differ from allochronic works because they age. Allochronic works are continually reinstated, so they are neither fully subjected to the process of entropy nor subject to the lasting effects of degradation, alteration, or decay. An allochronic work accretes recursively, in the form of plural realizations, whereas an autochronic work's constitutive parts deteriorate over time.<sup>41</sup> And yet in reality the division between allochronic and autochronic forms is not clear-cut: in terms of the distinction between material and recursive changes, for instance, allochronic performances may produce autochronic leftovers; and allochronic events, autochronic scores. Rather than viewing artworks dualistically, we can see them as hybrid forms. According to philosopher Jerrold Levinson, hybrid forms involve reorganizing or recombining "preexisting materials into unprecedented wholes."<sup>42</sup> Hybrid art forms, such as concrete poetry, collage, kinetic sculpture, and opera, not only combine different forms but entail a potentially endless number of coexistent or coincident possibilities within which they might be conceptualized. Just as epistemic objects are never fully themselves, we cannot attain a full understanding of such works.

### **Materiality beyond Opticality**

Another shift in the conception of the object after the 1960s involves the loss of trust in eyesight. Previously, archivists' and iconographers' investigations focused on visual qualities rather than the material presence or basic materialism of an artwork.<sup>43</sup> Tactile, auditory, textual, or olfactory works (whether intended by the maker or emerging as an effect of material degradation) challenged modernist models of opticality. Immersion, synesthesia, and embodied encounters became essential to the experience of a work.<sup>44</sup> The shift poses a major problem for traditional art history. Although contemporary art history engages with materials,

most traditional art historical analysis of material remains at a very abstract or general level.<sup>45</sup> The vocabulary is missing for looking closely, and pictures forever remain images. Many art historians have dealt with these challenges in their attentive material studies. Using the lens of material concerns, conservation can convincingly overcome what James Elkins calls “the fear of materiality.” In a positive sense, the slowness of objects, their abundant, vital, and vibrant materiality, which unfolds only at a slow pace, forces us to look closer.<sup>46</sup>

### **Material As an End in Itself**

After a long history of merely serving the purpose of representation, much of the art developed since the 1960s makes its material condition its *raison d'être*. This art aims to explicate what it is and how it is, *materially*. Fluxus events, for instance, create situations in which works are both a means to an end and ends in themselves.<sup>47</sup> The material ceases to serve the function of carrying an image and becoming transparent as a result.<sup>48</sup> It no longer plays a supporting role in the sublimation of an object into an aesthetic experience. Rather, the material is and constitutes the aesthetic experience itself. When materials often “are what they are,”<sup>49</sup> they contribute to the inherent vitality of art and cannot be divorced from the experience of an artwork.<sup>50</sup> In the once-established division between the surface of a work of art and its representational content, the viewer must maneuver between two experiences or two aspects of experiencing an artwork.<sup>51</sup> Seeing a work that does not represent or allude to another reality but *is* itself directs attention away from its content to the marks and structures that constitute it materially. Ignoring the physical marks of making and the traces of an artwork’s alteration and transformation means discounting it as a complex entity that can convey meaning and be self-referential (point to itself). Material as end in itself also places particular significance on conservation. When conservation is no longer focused on improving a precious painting’s material condition, then conservation’s material investment in the work becomes a visible intervention that is not limited to concealing or compensating for its deterioration but extends to the creative and authorial interpretation of the modified work.<sup>52</sup>

Since the 1960s, there have been few limits to what we can define as art, but this change demands a conscious approach to media and materials. The modernist category of medium specificity<sup>53</sup> no longer applies to these works. The shift from stasis to a kind of dynamism that requires

new forms of perception has challenged art history, curatorial practices, and the traditional ethos of conservation. Changeable artworks expand the understanding of curatorial practice and the pursuit and role of conservation by turning away from the standards that rendered the museum a repository of static material objects. Conservation has since gradually adapted to accommodate the inherent vitality of these artworks and has developed a novel understanding of its role in relation to changeable art.

### **Conservation and Contingency**

But what, actually, is conservation? Today, conservation no longer aims simply to prolong its objects' material lives into the future. It is now seen as an engagement with materiality rather than material,<sup>54</sup> contending with many specific factors that determine how an object's identity and meaning are entangled with time and space, the environment, values, politics, economics, conventions, and culture. Additionally, beyond its concern with objects, conservation has also begun to engage with human subjects and the accompanying notions of the transmission of tradition, memory, skill, technique, and the conveyance of knowledge, whether tacit or explicit, embodied or nonembodied. As an entanglement of theory and practice, seen from a diachronic perspective, contemporary conservation is an altogether distinct theoretical-practical construct—a complex sum of approaches and processes that cannot be placed in preestablished categories.

Although the authors in this book use notions of conservation in different ways, I use the term to encompass conservation, restoration, and preservation. As part of technical science, conservation comprises, among other things, all actions related to the manipulation of objects—their examination, documentation, and maintenance—that are to varying degrees oriented toward securing their existence and survival. Along with its archival systems, conservation has a theoretical foundation as well as an understanding of the objects, their makers, and specific techniques and approaches. Conservation always exists somewhere within a dichotomy between hands and minds, practice and theory, hard sciences and the humanities, the tangible and the intangible, the traditional and the new. Traditional conservation is too often and too simply set in opposition to new approaches, oriented toward recent media, that do not necessarily entail new theoretical reasoning.<sup>55</sup> And yet novel conservation thinking might just as well be applied to traditional art and artifacts. In practice, attitudes

and concepts often intersect, and the most innovative voices never remain entirely free from the strictures of the past. Thus, conservation's theoretical underpinnings are neither entirely progressive nor restrictive. Understanding conservation as a knowledge-generating activity opens up its archive as a rich history of ideas, attitudes, cultures, and potentialities.

### **A Brief History**

The conservation of fine art has a long history of beginnings, marked by various modes of practice and principles, in the course of which theories have emerged only in the very recent past. It is often assumed—explicitly or implicitly—that the development of conservation is progressive, that later achievements are an improvement on earlier ones. From this perspective, conservation began to supplant restoration in the nineteenth century and advanced from “the level of working-class artisanship to that of an exact science” after World War II.<sup>56</sup> Contrary to the progressive model, conservation has continued to reinvent itself throughout history in contingent and nonlinear ways. Artisanship has never disappeared, and conservation's “scientific grounding” goes hand in hand with its development within the humanities. As a result, we might speak of different cultures of conservation—artisanal, artistic, scientific, and humanistic (or value based)—that have existed parallel to each other throughout history and that arose from and have generated distinct kinds of knowledge. The contingency of conservation—that is, its dependence on historical circumstance and embeddedness in the ruling social, political, and economic conditions—acts against its supposed uniformity.

In the first century CE, Pliny the Elder provided the earliest written evidence for the conservation of antiquities, although without detailing any actual technique.<sup>57</sup> The foundations for modern conservation were first laid during the Renaissance. Benvenuto Cellini described the methods and thoughts of Renaissance restorers, although he appears to have had a low regard for restoration, despite its requiring both skill and an understanding of materials.<sup>58</sup> In the skilled hands of artist-restorers and artisans, the rapid development of restoration was mainly dictated by the tastes of the time and became popularized with the rise of antiquarianism. The discovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum and their subsequent excavation impelled the development of preservation techniques. It is not without reason that the roots of scientific conservation are attributed to the rise of archaeological conservation. Scientists at the end

of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth became interested in antiquities, with an emphasis more on understanding the materials themselves than on the actual treatment of archaeological objects. The development of scientific laboratories at museums, especially the work of Friedrich Rathgen at the *Königliche Museen* in Berlin, laid the groundwork for the rise of a science-based conservation concerned with the examination of materials and the processes of their deterioration.<sup>59</sup> The scientific approach to the conservation of archaeological artifacts had an immense impact on the development of the positivistic, analytic branch of conservation, a form later linked through common disciplinary origins with the emerging specialty of technical art history.<sup>60</sup> The introduction and acceptance of scientific analysis as a key to understanding artworks resulted in the establishment of conservation based on the conviction that truths about objects can be revealed through science.

In general, science-based conservation is oriented toward visual and structural aspects; it is object-based and rests on a scientific positivism that treats objects as conveyors of truth, whereas humanistic conservation is bound up with culture, people, and their values. It embraces an inclusive, relativistic, pluralistic, and all-encompassing view of a network of people and things that places people and objects in equally significant positions.<sup>61</sup> Artworks are treated as cultural products and dynamic entities, the materiality of which can only be identified within an entangled network of relations, including social and temporal factors. Rather than seeking evidence of an artwork's past exclusively under a microscope, humanistic conservation is allied with the social and historical sciences, philosophy and aesthetics, and archaeology. Humanistic conservation distances itself from conventional notions of material authenticity and instead views artworks and artifacts as processes evolving and changing in time, not reducible to a particular condition at a particular time subject to measurement and analysis.

### **Recent Conservation**

Developments in recent art and media have prompted a radical rethinking of conservation paradigms and principles.<sup>62</sup> Until then, fine art conservation was accustomed to traditional forms, such as painting and sculpture, grasped in terms of their material properties and the history of their creation, authorship, and display, deduced either from their physical

structure or from the recorded evidence. The transitory aspects of art created since the 1960s have pushed conservation toward its limits. Defining the specificity of the physical medium of a multimedia artwork, including moving images, organic materials, and sculpturally significant display and playback apparatus, may not be sufficient to understand what and how the artwork *is*—with reference to both its present and its (imagined) future.

What might be learned if a multimedia artwork were classified according to its physical and chemical make-up? What, for instance, can we learn about an artwork that uses a TV from the thickness of the phosphor coating on the inner wall of its screen or the acceleration of electrons activated in its cathode ray tube? What can be learned about a performance work if we look solely at the physical constituents of a human body? Media installations, performances, events, and processes are complex entities in which all components exist in a set of fragile relationships, including the space they inhabit, the viewer, and the behavior/action of these elements over time. They are inextricably linked with the concepts of duration, change, and experience, which demand a new set of conceptual tools.

Conservation has to grapple not just with the artwork's physical carriers but with artistic media that mediate between what the artist does and what the work communicates. The dialectic of concept and material is complicated by intricate materialities—plastic, electronics, binary code, and organic media, all with their specific processes of decay—as well as by extended collaborations and distributed authorship,<sup>63</sup> all of which have an impact on the current paradigms of conservation. The aesthetics of change, the logic of iterations, cyclical materializations, reconfigurations, and fragmentation, as well as the quest for decentering authorial agency characteristic of the post-Cage era, demand an entirely different mindset. It might be said that the primacy of hands and the implementation of technical know-how have been left behind by the conceptual aspects involved in the perpetuation of new media works as a form of cultural expression.

Change is also at the forefront in the critique of the omnipresent discourse of material authenticity in traditional conservation. “Authentic” always requires a referent, because not all authentic objects are authentic in every respect. In conservation, authenticity is usually tied to the selection of a particular moment in the genealogy of an artwork to authenticate its relation to time and to reconfirm its value as both a historical artifact and a commodity. Newer thinking in conservation takes into consideration an artwork's trajectory; it treats an artwork as a palimpsest capable of accumulating changes and allowing for multiple interpretations.<sup>64</sup>

Conservation of recent art is neither oriented toward nor dependent

on traditional conservation. Although this may seem to be a questionable statement, it is predicated on the new character of works and an openness toward the intangible qualities of cultural production, such as the transmission of skills, techniques, memories, or knowledge more broadly. There is also another consequence to the complex relation between the old and the new: recent theoretical approaches do not simply exist as independent constructs; rather, they forever alter our view of the theories and practices of traditional conservation, including its static conception of the object and its material authenticity. In other words, it is impossible to think of traditional objects and traditional conservation, with its old, time-proven paradigms, in the same way in the face of new scholarship that turns over almost every aspect of conventional thinking. Among the questions that ought to be posed in relation to recent works are the following: Does the evolving concept of conservation still hold the promise of keeping the artworks “conserved,” stable and intact? Can we talk about conservation in the traditional sense if there is in fact little—and sometimes nothing—that can be physically preserved?

### **Conservation As Generative and Participative Activity**

The history of conservation has been marked by taboos and restrictions, including restricting creative intervention.<sup>65</sup> But conservators who interact with works created since the 1960s can no longer forgo creative intervention. Conservation has turned from saving properties and artifacts to preserving ideas and culture, no longer crippling the creative use of the past by turning objects into relics.<sup>66</sup> The many examples of interventions scrutinized in this book confirm that every actualization of an artwork—its reenactment, reinstallation, or reinstantiation—necessarily involves, but above all also legitimatizes, creative gestures. This is not to say, however, that the creativity of conservation has only appeared with recent media, for it has always been present in conservation in the stories it tells about its objects, interpreting and actualizing them according to the cultural, political, and economic conditions of its time.

Conservation creatively invests in the history of artworks and, according to Paul Eggert, must be seen “as a competing and complementary authorial (or editorial) agency, occupying a place *in* the work. This has effects on how we view the concept of the work and how we understand each individual one.”<sup>67</sup> Eggert offers a creative and participative approach to conservation. The participative aspects of

conservation involve executing or actualizing works on the basis of the archive, creating conservation narratives,<sup>68</sup> documentary records or “memories” of an event,<sup>69</sup> and conducting artist interviews.<sup>70</sup> The productive acknowledgment of the creative power of conservation and its participative dimension may abet its emancipation as a discipline. Acknowledging the creative aspects of conservation entails no obligation to remove traces of the life the object has already lived or to recreate the work in an idealized version. Conservation creatively and participatively renders the past present by extending its duration into the present. Rather than isolating the past from the present, conservation shifts the focus from the physical artifact to its signification, its embeddedness in discourse and intertextuality.

### **Conservation and Materiality: Assembling Things, Generating Knowledge**

Conservation requires an understanding of materiality as changeable, temporal, and relational. It discloses the intrinsic social, spatial, and temporal relations of objects, bodies, and things, and reveals what often remains undisclosed: the sheer materiality of the world in constant flux, the way in which materials fall into disrepair and reveal what they are—a complex sum of technologies of production and practices of use and reuse. Heidegger used the example of a broken hammer to illustrate the transition from readiness-to-hand (*Zuhandenheit*) to presence-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit*). When a hammer is ready-to-hand, we use it without theorizing; it is simply an extension of a hand and fits into a network of actions, purposes, and functions. But when a hammer breaks, we become conscious of how it mediates our actions. It returns to our attention, and when we act on it, we are mindful of it as an object in our activity. In other words, when things fall into disrepair or decay, they reveal what they are; they open their black boxes of technological or organic (non)functionality, as in Bruno Latour’s overhead projector, which announces its existence only in the moment of crisis, when it breaks and thus mobilizes social and material actants.<sup>71</sup> The material is no longer transparent (and ignorable) but opaque; it no longer works, and we therefore cannot take it at its surface value.

Against the hierarchies of time, linear genealogies and the hegemony of measurable time, conservation is, then, an act of assembling things and practices of different origins, histories, and social and cultural milieus. Assembling things means to act upon and create an active mesh of



artworks and artifacts that refuses the kind of hierarchical stratification that results in notions of an original, authentic, and intended condition. Conservation thus becomes a way of theorizing, of bringing objects to conscious attention, of making them apparent.

### **How to Get There, Chapter by Chapter**

This collection of essays begins and ends with an artistic rather than a scholarly perspective. It is framed by Hannah Higgins's argument for keeping Fluxus events alive and a conversation with Johannes M. Hedinger that considers the open-ended artwork *Bloch*. The eight essays in between argue from different perspectives for keeping works alive, whether through video, performance, choreography, action, digital and environmental art, or an exhibition.

The two-part chapter that opens this volume is not entirely artistic—it combines scholarship with performance. Hannah Higgins, Fluxus scholar and “witness” (she is the daughter of Fluxus artists Dick Higgins and Alison Knowles), enacts with her mother a lecture-performance that incorporates Fluxus events using food. Her essay combines an art historical analysis of performative learning with an experimental, scripted performance. She emphasizes the importance of primary experience in the reception and understanding of a work of art. Recognizing that conventional modes of lecturing are ill suited to multimodal experiential works, Higgins is interested in bringing critical analysis and live performance together “with common performers, in a common site, for a common duration, and before a common public.” Her performative lecture breaks with the conventional narrative of art historical writing by creating a script that makes the historian a performer and the artist a participant in making history creatively. The chapter traverses sixty years of art making, art curating, performance thinking, performance making, and the long-twentieth-century project of dismantling the notion that materiality and corporeality and also concept and enactment are mutually exclusive. Higgins calls attention to the deadening effect of placing documentary evidence of performances in archives—a fate shared by many of the performances of the 1960s and 1970s. Although she acknowledges the value of archives, she mourns the aspects of works that are “lost in the process of their historicization, theorization, and documentation on paper.” Performance, then, is a way to keep their structural and material aspects alive. As Higgins puts it, materials “reveal

themselves through interactions with each other, with people, with a world ever in flux.”

Chapter 2 continues the consideration of the activation of objects and the necessity of experience in relation to the materiality of Franz Erhard Walther’s *Werkstücke* (Work pieces). Although Walther neither belonged to the Fluxus circle nor was particularly interested in categorizing his practice, his *Werkstücke* are reminiscent of Fluxus works and their cognitive/embodied realizations. Walther’s works cannot be approached as if their materials could be kept in an untouched form. They are neither simply objects nor simply performances; rather, they are fluid and heterogeneous assemblages—partly implements, partly sculptures—of activated performances and at the same time active physical artifacts. Inherently unstable, their completion in the mind of the viewer adds yet another level of complexity. *Werkstücke* are both relics a priori and remnants of a future. They are accompanied by instructions in the form of drawings, videos, photographs, scores, and the artist’s verbal directions. The chapter presents copying as performative learning: the works generate material and corporeal knowledge. The relationality of his work and its vital materiality, lively power, and efficacy challenge traditional approaches to conservation.

Picking up the Fluxus strand, the next chapter is devoted to a close examination of Paik’s satellite works, *Good Morning, Mr. Orwell* (1984), *Bye Bye Kipling* (1986), and *Wrap Around the World* (1988). Media scholar Gregory Zinman considers Paik’s celebration of “oneness” in relation to the multiple rematerializations of his satellite pieces in single-channel videos, video sculptures, and multichannel video installations. Zinman guides the reader through the extended performance of Paik’s satellite works as they transmute from global broadcast to monumentalized works to an atomized form as museum installations and online viewing rooms. His account pays tribute to Paik’s prolific versatility, evident in his repurposing his satellite pieces in multiple variants in different media, but Zinman also mourns the loss of the vitality of the particular moment of their original broadcast. Observing Paik’s works in their constantly transmuting and vagrant form, Zinman asks whether such works can ever be regarded as final. Should a work’s variants be viewed as entirely autonomous, or are they subordinate to the satellite broadcast that gave rise to them? Zinman’s analysis poses challenging questions about preservation: If there is no “definitive” variant, are all Paik’s generative reworkings and borrowings equally significant? How does image mobility—not only through different kinds of display but also transfers from one medium

or platform to another—affect meaning? The issues involved in creating and circulating satellite pieces offer fruitful ground for rethinking Paik's works and the links between their exhibition, preservation, and interpretation. Zinman sees a form of preservation in Paik's endowing the otherwise vanishing broadcast events—otherwise unrepeatably—with new life (or an afterlife) through “eternal returns.”

Chapter 4 interweaves Hannah Wilke's and her mother's personal stories with issues of impermanence and decay in Wilke's art. The fragility of the degrading material of Wilke's works parallels the fragility of her body as it succumbed to illness, which the artist documented in biographic photographs. In a gesture of preservation, the curator and art historian Andrea Gyorody places work that has disappeared from view in the limelight again. Gyorody argues convincingly that in Wilke's case the radical acceptance of impermanence allows the work to vanish; art does not need to be forever. She guides the reader through the complexity of curatorial work in collections of recent art that engage with fugitive materials, making decay and degradation part of the creative process. Even if a work falls apart and ceases to function as it once did, it need not be relegated once and for all to the museum vault. Wilke's sculpture may transgress the limits of acceptable change, but its current state of disintegration can be seen as a part of its “long performance,” which warrants our attention for reasons that are obviously different from when it was created. Putting such a performance on display enlivens the work and guarantees that it does not become irrelevant. The essay poses such questions as, Can we embrace an openness to time, uncertainty, and failure? Can the life of a work last well into its entropy? When does entropy actually preserve something of an artist's intention? Can conservation allow for decay? Gyorody makes a case for a new aesthetic that accepts and promotes the experience of decaying, unstable, and radically transformed materials and media—one that gives change, transitoriness, and degradation a positive value, allowing us to appreciate such processes in objects that are not destined for perpetuation.

Chapter 5 takes up the idea that a fleeting work can be grasped in a score or notation. Alison D'Amato is a trained performer, choreographer, and scholar of contemporary dance. Her essay focuses on the years 1960–61, preceding the ground-breaking concerts at Judson Church (1962–64) that paved the way for modern dance. D'Amato shifts the focus from performances to scores and uncouples choreographic notation from preservation, arguing for the validity of notation beyond its obligation to preserve movement and continuity. She finds movement

not only in dance, which notation is meant to capture, but in the notational document itself as a malleable, living structure. In this sense, the open-endedness of performance is further enhanced by the openness of the score. The object-performance binary dissolves; neither object nor performance maintains its capacity to clearly signify time. If, in its openness, the unspecified and undetermined score enters time/becomes durational in performance, then perhaps the performance stabilizes it. D'Amato offers a historical review of inscription as a means of standardizing, preserving, and reproducing the choreography's corporeal culture. She then suggests that recent generative scores guarantee the survival of performances not because the scores are a weapon against ephemerality but because they assure a performance's persistence in an inherently changeable and revisable form.

Art and dance historian Megan Metcalf's essay on Simone Forti's work continues to pursue choreographic concerns. An Italian-American artist, Forti started experimenting with choreography in 1961, issuing "dance reports" that she would read to the members of her dance composition class. One report features an onion-artwork that has been subsequently restaged.<sup>72</sup> Metcalf tracks the evolution of the curious artwork "from printed page to museum stage," placing it in the context of Forti's other works of the period and artworks by other artists in the same milieu. As a dance itself and in relation to other dances by Forti, the "modest little vegetable" complicates distinctions between object and event, idea and material, and the past and the present, challenging conventional methods of curating and conservation based on a historical "original" and/or an artist's initial impulse. As Metcalf argues, these concepts have become less reliable in the wake of 1960s practices that dismantled the notion of a single art object and the authority of the artist's hand. By staging and choreographing Forti's "dance," curators have tested assumptions about what can be preserved and what constitutes an artwork's identity. Metcalf's essay raises the question, Can a humble vegetable become both a model and a metaphor for understanding some of the implications of the encounter between the visual and the performing arts? Forti's onion reflects important challenges that performances and works since the 1960s encounter with regard to their production, exhibition, documentation, and preservation in museums and puts forward novel ways of thinking about these works' materiality, durability, and continuity. Dance and choreography may achieve continuity without a permanent material form—a recurring motif in *Object—Event—Performance*.

Transitory forms not only complicate time and the temporal

understanding of artworks; they also complicate the space in which—and as which—these forms exist. In chapter 7, art historian and author Rebecca Uchill looks at earthworks and natural environments as “dynamic amalgams of produced forms, vast contexts, and contingent circumstances: aesthetic propositions that are more than the sums of their parts.” She discusses such iconic Land art pieces as Walter De Maria’s *The Lightning Field* and Robert Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty* along with their National Parks precedents. Because they are not reducible to an original or ideal site or state, these works expand the notion of viewership and present challenges to preservation. As a work of Land art is inseparable from its environment, Uchill introduces “viewshed” considerations that stewards must engage with, including the impossibility of defining a single vantage point from which the work should be viewed and of determining its beginning and end. Further, the space of a work such as *The Lightning Field* is “already animate as land, experience, object, event, and performance.” Because materiality, audience, and context are entangled in a system of dependencies, preservation requires a multivalent approach. Uchill raises urgent questions such as, How does the conservation and stewardship of Land art resist conventional “material” art practices? How do the philosophical aspects of the genre relate to more general conservation discussions about American landscapes?

Chapter 8 returns to exhibitions, exploring the interrelatedness of artworks and their spaces, which in turn impact an artwork’s identity. Art historian and curator Susanne Neubauer focuses on the monographic exhibition of the American artist Richard Tuttle that Marcia Tucker curated at the Whitney in 1975. As an example of how display and curatorial narratives perpetuate artworks, the Whitney exhibition serves as a thought-provoking moment in the history of curating. Tuttle’s works challenge the museum system, and Tucker’s approach to their display generated a heated debate that resulted in Tucker’s dismissal from the museum. Familiar with the challenges that the presentation of postminimal art poses, Neubauer analyzes how exhibition activated the material of Tuttle’s works and how the documentation narratives in Tucker’s exhibition catalogue both emulated and “musealized” them. In addition, she considers the viewers’ interactive response and experience, in which the vitality of matter is a crucial element. Tuttle’s pieces offer an example of works that are “enlivened” when displayed and “still” when stored. Neubauer presents Tucker’s curatorial work in terms of “gestures” and “actions” that intervene and allow new configurations and narratives to emerge. The essay brings the performance-based aspect of curation to

the fore, highlighting the creative power of conservation and of curation as conservation.

In chapter 9, curator and new media scholar Beryl Graham presents examples of new media works that require an awareness of systemic relations. Digital networked artworks are often, in her words, “difficult to categorize,” because they are “both object-based and immaterial, time-based, interactive, and highly variable in different installations.” These works complicate not only conservation and curatorial decisions but also the museum’s traditional function of collecting works as physically definable objects. Drawing from her experience with contemporary new media artists as well as curator Steve Dietz’s publications on new media, Graham proposes that we view these works not in terms of their specific materials but rather as immaterial systems, placing them in relation to the conceptual systems that underpin the artist’s ideas and, more broadly, institutional systems that shape the works, including archives and collections. In this way, the emphasis shifts from the objects themselves to the systems surrounding them. She considers the role of collecting systems and the ways in which the works are conserved within them. The systems should respect not only the character but also the behaviors of new media, taking on the task of recording artists’ algorithms, cross-cultural references, multiple authorships, and interactions. Imagining the future of new media works, documentation is not only a crucial aspect of curatorial work but also completes the circle of collecting, preserving, and exhibiting these works.

Shifting from traditional essay to a conversational format, the last chapter of the book invites the reader on a journey with *Bloch*—a work created by the Swiss duo Johannes M. Hedinger and Marcus Gossolt. *Bloch* is an open, generative form, with an immense creative potential. *Bloch*’s central element is a traveling tree trunk, an example of a three-hundred-year-old Swiss Appenzell tradition. *Bloch* straddles contemporary art and folk culture, creating an exchange among people and things of different cultural backgrounds; it exists between media categories and aesthetic definitions. The work is living and changing, sharing its energy with the energy of those invested in a collaborative effort that brings *Bloch* as a global project to fruition. Without a determined end, *Bloch* is an object and an event that unfolds in time and is continued in the lives of works produced during its journey. Both tangible and intangible, *Bloch*’s expanding archive accumulates traces, objects, stories, and memories. It also challenges forms of preservation and the notion that an artwork must be a discrete object that endures in a physical form.

The conversation foregrounds the artists' vision for *Bloch's* continuing life. To continue its story, *Bloch* will return to the site where it originated, perhaps back to the Appenzell forest or in the town square in Urnäsch, where, exposed to the weather, it may one day turn into dust. *Bloch* exemplifies how our efforts to keep things from the past, so that we and our stories will be remembered, are always time-bound, and how, ultimately, we—and they—will disappear and new things will emerge, starting the process again, perhaps beyond human history.

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This book is neither a manual on how to conserve works nor a theory of conservation. Rather, it attempts to lay the groundwork for a conservation theory of art and material culture (as distinct from conservation theory and art theory) that treats artworks not only as conceptually multivalent but also material, temporal, and changeable. This collection of essays allows various knowledges and cultures of conservation to coexist and incorporates different forms of knowing and practicing. It grants views that are not in the mainstream of conservation theory and practice the attention they deserve and lets them enter an otherwise hermetic realm. When viewed in terms of their material, temporal, and social relations rather than their intrinsic properties (as is often the case in science-oriented conservation), artworks become active, changeable, and relational; they can be conceptualized in new constellations released from the exclusive ownership of expertise.

Artworks produced since the 1960s exist in relations, as systems of ingredients, parts, and fixings. Their *spacetime-mattering*, to adopt Barad's term,<sup>73</sup> is constituted by temporally and spatially disparate components on many levels and in multiple dimensions. An artwork is a sort of cosmos in itself, and any change in a constituent part shifts its relationship to other parts and reforms the artwork's inner dynamic. In other words, as complex temporal entities—performances, events, and processes contingent on the viewer and space-time they inhabit—these works explicate the fragile relations among human or nonhuman actants, events, and situations. Their temporal and relational materiality is always dependent on these relations and the various contexts in which they are situated.

But new materialism such as Barad's asks questions not only of objects but of agents. Indeed, rather than being "objects" per se, all objects are

agents, and all agents are in material relations. To state that objects have agency means to acknowledge them not as lumps of matter waiting to be acted on by intelligent human beings but as entities with properties, causalities, and affordances (or potential uses) that delineate human behavior and subjectivity. From Alfred Gell<sup>74</sup> through Bruno Latour to Graham Harman and Jane Bennett, an understanding of the agency or animacy of materials has attempted to dissolve the human/thing boundary and position objects not as subordinate to humans but as equal partners in the collective of humans and nonhumans.

To “conserve” the changeability of objects—or objects *in* or *as* their changeability—might thus require decisions related to their restoration, preservation, or cultivation of their actancy. If the new conservation is to rely on the expanded concepts of human and nonhuman agency, the crucial questions must be, How is it being done? Does it require focused attention on what and how performance and event work in relation to objects? Does conservation of agential objects mean allowing them to fully dictate their conditions of care? Would conservation shift entirely into a performative paradigm, leaving aside the dead matter of fixity and authenticity? Building on an existing scholarship in and outside the conservation of recent art and offering important glimpses of the novel thinking in the field, *Object—Event—Performance* begins to consider these questions.

#### NOTES

Epigraph: From Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 12. As Haraway acknowledges, the first sentence of this epigraph stems from the social anthropologist Marilyn Strathern.

1. The historical moment in which a conservation measure is enacted is equally decisive in our apprehension of how conservation shapes the identity of artworks.
2. Hans-Jörg Rheinberger defines the term “experimental system” as “a basic unit of experimental activity combining local, technical, instrumental, institutional, social, and epistemic aspects.” Such systems are characterized by the interaction of “epistemic things” (the object of knowledge) and “technical objects” (the technical conditions in which an experiment takes place). Rheinberger, *Toward a History of Epistemic Things*, 238. I have adapted this concept in relation to conservation as a particular experimental culture and a privileged space in which knowledge emerges.



3. Archaeologists Rodney Harrison and John Schofield use the term “auto-archaeology” to refer to the archaeology that “digs out” the recent material evidence focusing on the space in which the author worked. I use the term to signal the need to excavate recent conservation histories, which often get buried under the challenges of new works of art and institutions. For autoarchaeology, see Harrison and Schofield, “Archaeo-Ethnography, Auto-Archaeology.”
4. Foucault examines, within his notion of archaeology, the discursive traces left by the past in order to write a “history of the present.” Clare O’Farrell, “Michel Foucault, Key Concepts,” Foucault News (website), <https://michel-foucault.com/key-concepts/>.
5. I first put forth the idea of conservation as epistemic practice in Hölling, “Conservation and Contingency.” See also Hölling, “Technique of Conservation.”
6. Science historian Donna Haraway coined the term “situated knowledge,” according to which all forms of knowledge arise from the social identities and locations of knowledge producers. Haraway acknowledges the contestable nature of claims to knowledge and understands that knowledge is contingent on our own position in the world. Against the belief that science—or conservation science for that matter—is uniquely equipped to develop epistemologically objective claims using correct methods of inquiry, the concept of situated knowledge allows us to question whether there is such a thing as objective “reality” on which science can ground its claims. For a brief definition, see *Oxford Dictionary of Human Geography*, s.v. “Situated Knowledge.” For Haraway’s view on this topic, see her “Situated Knowledges.” For its use in the context of conservation, see Marçal, “From Intangibility to Materiality and Back Again.”
7. Interdisciplinarity goes in both directions. To overcome a solitary effort, conservation should not only feel compelled to contribute to other disciplines but must also allow other viewpoints and approaches into its own knowledge formation. Too often, conservation practitioners are reluctant to accept the benefits of critical theoretical discourses, which appear to stand in the way of a more straightforward understanding of practice.
8. Our commitment to sustaining an interdisciplinary dialogue has its origins in “Revisions: Object—Event—Performance since the 1960s,” a symposium held on September 21, 2015, at Bard Graduate Center in New York. The symposium followed the opening of the Bard Graduate Center Gallery exhibition *Revisions—Zen for Film* (September 18, 2015–February 21, 2016). (A subsequent session, “Object—Event—Performance: Art and Materiality since the 1960s,” took place at the College Art Association in Los Angeles, February 21–24, 2018.) In addition to considering the intricacies of artworks created in this era, the presentations exposed the challenges in understanding the specialized language used by representatives of different fields. A recording of the proceedings is available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W\\_ViObHFWXs&ab\\_channel=bardgradcenter](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_ViObHFWXs&ab_channel=bardgradcenter). For information on the *Revisions—Zen for Film* exhibition, see <https://www.bgc.bard.edu/gallery/exhibitions/8/revisions-zen-for-film>. The digital

- interactive that accompanied the exhibition is available at <http://bgcdml.net/revisions/app/>. A related symposium, “Unfixed: Material Challenges in Contemporary Art,” held at the Art Institute of Chicago, June 28, 2018, picks up the topic of the unstable and transitory character of artworks. The symposium recording is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GF3DVLq83k>. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GF3DVLq83k>.
9. Hölling, Bewer, and Ammann, *Explicit Material*.
  10. “Kunst’ ist ein Kunstwerk nicht so lange, wie es hält, sondern passiert” (author’s translation). Heubach, *Zur Happening und Fluxus*, n.p.
  11. “What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event.” Rosenberg, “American Action Painters,” 22.
  12. McClure, “Notes on Adhesion,” 14.
  13. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*; Karen Barad, “Re-membering the Future, Re(con)figuring the Past—Temporality, Materiality, and Justice-to-Come,” <https://www.artandeducation.net/classroom/video/66314/karen-barad-re-membering-the-future-re-con-figuring-the-past-temporality-materiality-and-justice-to-come>.
  14. Brecht, quoted in Nyman, *Collected Writings*, 307.
  15. For this distinction, see Simons and Melia, “Continuants and Occurrents.”
  16. This discussion has been largely inspired by Simons and Melia, *ibid*.
  17. A passive response to time in an artwork signifies slower change that coincides with an artwork’s decay and degradation. Art that changes more quickly is usually also actively involved in processing time; such processing is intrinsic to film, video, TV, sculpture, multimedia, and performance art. For a discussion of these aspects, see chap. 7, “Heterotemporalities,” in Hölling, *Paik’s Virtual Archive*.
  18. An intriguing and not unrelated conception of artwork as event appears in Nagel and Wood’s study of the visual arts in *Anachronic Renaissance*. The authors suggest that a work of art bends and doubles time, being “a strange kind of event whose relation to time is plural.” Designed at a certain moment, the work “points away from that moment, backward to a remote ancestral original, perhaps, or to a prior artefact, or to an origin outside of time. . . . At the same time it points forward to all its future recipients who will activate and reactivate it as a meaningful event.” Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 9. In *Paik’s Virtual Archive*, I describe similar temporal twofoldness, based on Husserlian phenomenology (the philosophy of consciousness as dependent on a subject), in which the temporal vector of works is like retention and protention in that it points in both directions: to the past and to the future. Husserl rejects an understanding of the experience of the world as a series of unconnected instances. Protention (an anticipation of the next moment), though distinct from immediate experience, is retained in consciousness; it relates to the moment that has yet to be perceived. Continuity rests on the idea that each moment of protention becomes a retention (a perceptual act retained in consciousness) of the next. Retentions and protentions might stand for an artwork’s former and future instantiations creating a conceptual realm of duration where the past is rendered present, insofar as it is

- actualized in the present. In this framework, we are not concerned with the instances of artworks that have been. Rather, protentions might stand for the artwork's future changeability. Hölling, *Paik's Virtual Archive*, 104–5. For an explanation of Husserl's account of time-consciousness, see Blaiklock, "Husserl, Protention, and the Phenomenology of the Unexpected."
19. For art historical narrative, see Michael Fried's notion of "objecthood" in his essay "Art and Objecthood" (1967).
  20. Harman, *Object Oriented Ontology*; Morton, *Hyperobjects*.
  21. "Processual materiality" refers to the entanglement of materiality within a host of ever-changing relations. See Bennett's discussion of "vital materialism" in *Vibrant Materiality*.
  22. Rheinberger, *Toward a History of Epistemic Things*. See also Smith, *Body of the Artisan*, on artisanal epistemology. In "Objectual Practice," Knorr Cetina discusses epistemic objects as subject to continuous evolution and thus marked by an infinite potential for their definition.
  23. The idea of unfolding objects, either in museum collections or as a subject of diverse disciplinary approaches, was pursued by Pip Laurenson, among others, in her lecture "Can Artworks Live in a Museum Collection?," <https://vimeo.com/184868009>. Laurenson refers to Knorr Cetina's notions of relational and creative practice and her concept of epistemic objects (things that we engage with during our knowledge-producing activities) and explores the possibility of conceptualizing unfinished, incomplete objects—in other words, unfolding works—as epistemic objects of both conservation and artistic practice.
  24. For decay, see chapter 4 on Wilke; for alteration, see chapters on Forti (6), Paik (3), Smithson and De Maria (7), Tuttle (8), and Com&Com (10); for technological obsolescence, see chapters on Paik (3) and digital media (9).
  25. For score-based works, see chapters 1, 2, 5, 6, and 9.
  26. See chapter 8 for a discussion of Richard Tuttle's postminimalist works, chapter 7 for Land art, and chapter 9 for digital art.
  27. For a discussion of the relation of work to space, see chapter 6 on Forti, chapter 8 on Tuttle, and chapter 10 on Com&Com.
  28. See chapter 3 on Paik's video art and chapter 9 on new media.
  29. For a change permissible for an artwork, see Wilke's case of dead work (chapter 4) or the buoyant graffiti on *Bloch* (chapter 10). A change that transgresses the limits of identity might become, for instance, a dramatic change of behavior in new media work.
  30. I prefer to discuss works as "changeable" in place of other terms. "Variability," for instance, denotes the extent of change possible within limits set out in scores or instructions. Unlike changeability, variability implies sameness, within a prescribed range related to some kind of mean value, rather than difference. "Transience" and "ephemerality" are yet other placeholders for varying kinds and intensities of change. Transience and ephemerality differ from each other. According to some media scholars, to establish this distinction, one needs to place transience in a spatial structure, in addition to its occurrence in time. Transient media are the arts of place. Transience describes a relation in space, "a relation

- normally between one moving and one unmoving or two unmoving parties to an act of mediation.” Cubitt, Papastergiadis, and McQuire, “Transient Media.” The authors discuss the distinction in relation to large-scale urban screens and how common technologies interact with the public.
31. See the discussion of thinly specified art work in the “What Is Collectible-ish? Documenting, Exhibiting, Audiences” section of chapter 9.
  32. Julia Robinson, “Fluxfest: George Brecht,” [http://members.chello.nl/j.seegers1/flux\\_files/brecht.html](http://members.chello.nl/j.seegers1/flux_files/brecht.html).
  33. As an activity of planning and organizing communication, infrastructure, and material components, service design aims to improve the interaction between the service provider and its users.
  34. For compelling examples of the modalities of new media documentation, see chapter 9.
  35. “First, works of art can . . . possess what we may call nominal authenticity, defined simply as the correct identification of the origins, authorship, or provenance of an object, ensuring, as the term implies, that an object of aesthetic experience is properly named. However, the concept of authenticity often connotes something else, having to do with an object’s character as a true expression of an individual’s or a society’s values and beliefs. This second sense of authenticity can be called expressive authenticity.” Dutton, “Authenticity in Art,” 259.
  36. *Ibid.*, 267.
  37. In his theory of symbols, analytic philosopher Nelson Goodman argues that a duplication of an artwork that exists in one material incarnation cannot count as genuine (a painting can be an authentic, original work of art), whereas each performance of music might count as a genuine instance of a musical work, though its correctness and quality may vary. Goodman proposes his influential distinction between autographic and allographic art in *Languages of Art*.
  38. Variable Media Initiative, which emerged at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York in 1999, has done important work in this area, applying a new model of documentation similar to the medium of the score. According to their findings, variable, distributed, and interdependent artworks could persist independently of their original medium (akin to independence from a particular instrumentation). Rinehart, “System of Formal Notation”; see also Graham’s “The Cheapness of Writing Paper, and Code” (chapter 9 in the present volume).
  39. I replace Goodman’s allographic and autographic with Michael Century’s neologisms “allochronicity” and “autochronicity.” Musical theorist and composer Century employs these terms in relation to the specificity of scores. He contrasts the open, improvisational, and allochronic character of the score on a continuum with the closed, routine character of an autochronic score. Michael Century (professor of new media and music, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, NY), in discussion with the author, October 2013.
  40. Although often used interchangeably, “actors” and “actants” have different meanings. “Actor” generally signifies a person who portrays a

character in a performance. According to Bruno Latour, actor-network theory “does not limit itself to human individual actors but extend[s] the word actor—or actant—to nonhuman, nonindividual entities.”

Latour, “On Actor-Network Theory.”

41. That allochronic works do not succumb to deterioration like autochronic works is, of course, an idealistic view that omits a wider range of examples, such as the relics or remnants of the very performance that pressures such a view, for these objects might just as well succumb to debilitation as all things material.
42. Levinson, “Hybrid Art Forms,” 11. Levinson’s concept of hybrid art can be compared with the notion of “intermedia,” introduced by Fluxus theorist and artist Dick Higgins to describe artistic activities, such as visual poetry and performance art, that dissolve boundaries between various genres and media and also between art and life. In other words, intermedia creates a way of operating that provides an alternative to fixed categories of art. Higgins, “Statement on Intermedia.”
43. The term “basic materialism” resonates with Georges Bataille’s term “base materialism,” which he used in the title for his 1930 essay “Base Materialism and Gnosticism.” From the perspective of basic materialism, matter is regarded as an active principle. For a consideration of Bataille’s concept, see Bois, “Base Materialism.” For an analysis of the insufficiency of optical analysis as a factor that dominated art history’s reluctance to engage with materials and materiality of art, see Elkins, “On Some Limits.”
44. See discussions of a Fluxus performance and performative lecture (chapter 1), Walther’s *Handlungen* (chapter 2), and Hedinger’s *Bloch* (chapter 10).
45. For shortcomings of the study of materiality in art history, see Elkins, “On Some Limits,” and Lange-Berndt, introduction to *Materiality*, 12.
46. I paraphrase Elkin’s dialectic of the fear of the materiality and the slowness of the studio into the “slowness of objects.” See Elkins, “On Some Limits,” 2.
47. See chapter 1 for a scripted event and chapter 5 for the generative potential of score-based works.
48. Gregory Currie claims that, for centuries, all traces of artistic activity and tools such as brushstrokes had to be subsumed or effaced. Works that do not draw attention to the surface and materiality of the structure that supports an image are called transparent. Works that emphasize the salience of marks and traces are nontransparent. Currie, “The Visible Surface: Painting, Photography, Cinema,” Scottish Aesthetic Forum, University of Edinburgh, December 11, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bggh89GIXPY>.
49. Robert Rauschenberg, quoted in Kirkpatrick, *Tanztheater und bildende Kunst nach 1945*, 77. Rauschenberg adds: “I tend to think of working as a kind of involvement with materials, as well as a rather focused interest which changes.”
50. See Wilke’s decaying sculpture (chapter 4), Walther’s *Werkstücke* (chapter 2), or Tuttle’s subtle propositions (chapter 8).
51. The argument for the division between the surface of a painting and its content representation has been popular in aesthetic theory. Art historian Ernst Gombrich argues that, in a painting, we cannot direct our attention

- simultaneously at the content and at the traces of making. My treatment of these two positions is indebted to Edward Winters's analysis in "Pictures and Their Surfaces: Wollheim on 'Twofoldness,'" <https://www.um.es/logica/Winters.htm>. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, 209–17, and Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, quoted in Winters. See also Currie's "Visible Surface."
52. Retouching techniques such as *tratteggio* or *rigatino* are virtuoso illusionistic techniques used to conceal loss. For an anthology that emphasizes the significance of conservation (and curation) in shaping the materiality and interpretation of artworks, see Hölling, Bewer, and Amman, *Explicit Material*.
  53. A principle in aesthetics and art criticism, medium specificity is associated with Clement Greenberg, who claimed that the ability of an artist to manipulate the unique features of a particular medium (of plastic arts) forms his or her area of competence. For Greenberg, an abstract painting was able to focus on the materiality of the medium (with media purity—a state uncontaminated by other media—being the perfect expression of media specificity). Greenberg, "Towards a New Laocoön."
  54. In the context of conservation, materiality is a social and temporal construct framing the existence of artworks and artifacts across different temporal and spatial contexts. For the different definitions of "matter," see JeeHee Hong, "Material/Materiality," Chicago School of Media Theory (Winter 2003), <https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/mediatheory/keywords/materialmateriality/>.
  55. Salvador Muñoz Viñas articulates the distinction between traditional and contemporary conservation theory clearly. He refers to "classical" rather than "traditional" conservation theory. See Muñoz Viñas, *Contemporary Theory of Conservation*, 36, 39. Pip Laurensen offers a critique of the traditional conservation object in "Authenticity, Change and Loss in the Conservation of Time-Based Media," *Tate Papers*, no. 6 (2006), <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tatepapers/authenticity-change-and-lossconservation-time-based-media>.
  56. Philippot, "Restoration from the Perspective of the Humanities," 217.
  57. Sease, "Short History of Archaeological Conservation."
  58. Cellini wrote, "It is by no means proper for me to patch up old statues, as that is generally done by a sort of bunglers in the business, who acquit themselves very indifferently." From the perspective of an artist, doing the job of mending other masters' crumbling sculptures was considered neither as artistic nor even as honorable work. Cellini, *Memoires of Benvenuto Cellini*, 405.
  59. In 1888 Rathgen was appointed head of the chemistry laboratory at the Königlische Museen in Berlin. He was the author of *Die Konservierung von Altertumsfunden*, published in 1898. Alexander Scott founded a conservation lab devoted to the analysis of materials and archaeological artifacts in 1920 at the British Museum; Harold J. Plenderleith oversaw the laboratory from 1949 to 1959. It was only in the 1930s that the focus slowly shifted to fine arts, marked by the publication of the *Manual of the Conservation and Restoration of Paintings* (London: Archetype, 1997), originally published by the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation in 1940. In America,

Edward Forbes established a research department at the Fogg Art Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts, run by George Stout, John Gettens, and others. In 1932 they established *Technical Studies in the Field of Fine Arts*, a journal that became a forum for publication of all matters related to conservation. For an account of the evolution of conservation technical studies, see Ainsworth, “From Connoisseurship to Technical History,” and for a discussion of the technical examination of artworks as it developed in the United States, see Bewer, *Laboratory for Art*.

60. David Bomford introduced the term “technical art history” in the late 1990s to describe the study of the materials, methods, and intentions of the maker. According to Erma Hermens, technical art history focuses on researching the material history of an artifact, which “goes hand in hand with an increasingly scientific approach in conservation research and methodology, rapidly developing scientific analytical applications, and a growing interest in documentary sources on techniques and materials past and present.” Hermens, “Technical Art History,” 151. See also Ainsworth, “From Connoisseurship to Technical History.” Technical art history is part of the development of art history as *Kunstwissenschaft* (science of art). One of the aims of Artechne: Technique in the Arts 1500–1950 (a five-year research initiative that began in 2015, led by Sven Dupré at Utrecht University) is “to write the history of the conservation studios or laboratories and the research uniting conservation, art history and science.” Sven Dupré and Marieke Hendriksen, “Introducing ARTECHNE—Technique in the Arts, 1500–1950,” The Recipes Project (website), June 30, 2016, <https://recipes.hypotheses.org/7986>. See esp. its colloquium, “The Making of Art Expertise: Changing Practices of Art History & Conservation, 1850–1950,” May 8–10, 2019, organized at Utrecht University and the University of Amsterdam, <https://artechne.wp.hum.uu.nl/artechne-conference-2019-the-making-of-art-expertise-changing-practices-of-art-history-conservation-1850-1950/>.
61. The placement of objects, humans, and processes in equally significant positions in creating social situations resembles actor-network theory, the science and technology studies approach developed in the 1980s, which assigns technological objects an agency equivalent to that of humans. See also note 40.
62. There is a considerable body of scholarship work on the conservation of recent and contemporary art. Publications have resulted from major conferences on this topic (see note 8 for examples) and from past and present research and collaboration initiatives, such as Aktive Archive (Zurich and Bern), DOCAM/Daniel Langlois Foundation for Art Science and Technology (Montreal), Media Matters, International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art, New Strategies for the Conservation of Contemporary Art (see also note 64), NeCCAR (Network for Conservation of Contemporary Art Research), NACCA (New Approaches to the Conservation of Contemporary Art), Variable Media Initiative, and Voices in Contemporary Art. Leading museums and institutes, such as the Tate in England; the Getty Center, Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and Rhizome in the United States; and

- several European institutions (Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, Foundation for the Conservation of Modern Art, Netherlands Media Art Institute/now LIMA Amsterdam, V2 Rotterdam, Stedelijk Museum, SMK Gent, SIK Zürich, Van Abbemuseum, ZKM Karlsruhe, among many others) have established research programs that focus on performance, media, video, kinetic, and digital art along with other “novel” genres. Sister fields, such as ethnographic conservation, also play an important role in reformatting the scope of the conservation of contemporary art by looking at living heritage (e.g., First Nations; see, for instance, Clavir, *Preserving What Is Valued*). Further theoretical contributions to the conservation of contemporary art have been made by heritage studies (David Lowenthal), literary studies (Paul Eggert), archaeological conservation (Elisabeth Pye), and architectural preservation (Jukka Jokilehto, Jorge Otero Pailos, and Thordis Arrhenius)—and this list is by no means exhaustive.
63. Distributed authorship refers to the phenomenon of art being produced, fabricated, or performed by many individuals rather than one individual. For instance, a multimedia installation might be conceived by an artist, realized by a team of collaborators or fabricators, and presented by curators. The acknowledgment of distributed authorship decenters and relativizes the sole authorial agency of the artist over the piece and recognizes others as crucial in shaping its trajectory.
  64. The discussion of an object as the sum of its transitions can be found in the work of David Lowenthal, who recognizes the historical palimpsests of built heritage and values its endurance through a sequence of changes rather than in an original or originating state. See, for instance, Lowenthal’s *The Past Is a Foreign Country* and “Sea-Change Rich and Strange.” The topic of the trajectories of objects has also been at the center of scholarship that emerged out of the project New Strategies for the Conservation of Contemporary Art at the University of Amsterdam, Maastricht University, and the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (2009–13) with participants Renée van de Vall, Vivian van Saaze, Taja Scholte, Ijsband Hummelen, Sanneke Stigter, Annet Dekker, Angela Matyssek, and the editor of this volume. See van de Vall, Hölling, Scholte, and Stigter, “Reflections on a Biographical Approach to Contemporary Art Conservation.”
  65. The restriction confirms the aptness of Nietzsche’s observation that a profession is defined by things its practitioner is forbidden to do. As an upholder of physical order, however, forgetfulness was essential to Nietzsche’s philosophical project. Nietzsche, *On the Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life*.
  66. For this argument, see Lowenthal, “Material Preservation and Its Alternatives,” 71. Salvador Muñoz Viñas’s *Contemporary Theory of Conservation* treats conservation as a creative profession, pointing to its “fabrication of heritage” (112–13, 147–50). Frank Hassard calls conservation-restoration a “creative practical discipline,” following in the footsteps of Hans-Georg Gadamer, who argued that the restorer, the preserver of tangible heritage, is necessarily an artist of his time. Hassard, “Heritage, Hermeneutics, and Hegemony,” 340; Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 138–39. D. E. Cosgrove



- claims that conservation, because it intervenes in the life of an object, may be regarded as “creative intervention, subject to the same individual and social negotiations and struggles over meaning and representation as any other action.” Cosgrove, “Should We Take It All So Seriously?”
67. Eggert, *Securing the Past*, 112. For a comparison of the roles of editors and conservators, see Eggert, “The Present, the Past, and the Material Object,” 64–78.
  68. For the actualization of artworks on the basis of the virtual and physical archive and the concept of the conservation narrative, see Hölling, *Paik's Virtual Archive*, 132–33, 141–65.
  69. In relation to documentary records or “memories” of an event, I am referring to the recent practices in the preservation of performance and the notion of the body as an archive.
  70. Hélia Marçal discusses the participatory aspects of conservation in relation to Portuguese performance in “Conservation in an Era of Participation.” See also accounts of the role of the conservator’s participation in ethnographic research in van Saaze, *Installation Art and the Museum*; the treatment of subjectivity in Stigter’s self-reflexive, qualitative “Autoethnography as a New Approach in Conservation”; and the use of ethnographic method in recent research into the site-specific installation works by Tatja Scholte, “Insite/Outsite.”
  71. Latour, “On Technical Mediation,” 36.
  72. The report was published in the influential *An Anthology of Chance Operations*, edited by La Monte Young, copublished with Jackson Mac Low and designed by George Maciunas in 1963. See also references to the anthology in chapters 1 and 5.
  73. Barad’s “spacetime-mattering” refers to matter as the ongoing differentiating of the world. See Barad, “Re-membering the Future, Re(con)-figuring the Past.”
  74. In *Art and Agency*, the social anthropologist Gell formulated an influential theory of art that postulates that visual artifacts act on their users, that is, achieve agency.

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Hölling

Object—Event—Performance:  
Art, Materiality, and Continuity Since the 1960s

BGC

*“Object—Event—Performance* lays out several tantalizing observations on the ways that art since the 1960s increasingly challenged the traditional values found in art and conservation. Against traditional art forms, new artistic practices encompassed experimental, often ephemeral, and live performed elements. What would it mean to “conserve” these artworks? The volume is ambitious and informative, and the approach particularly germane to the artistic practices that are predicated upon live performance, variously conceived, with elements captured in ways difficult to preserve or transfer. It is a valuable contribution to conversations that continue to be explored within the field of conservation.”

—Joyce Tsai, Chief Curator of the Stanley Museum of Art, Associate Professor of Practice, School of Art and Art History, University of Iowa

*“This collection is promising for its conception of conservation as a ‘participative practice’ that alters as much as conserves an object or a work and for its emphasis on the dynamic changeability of art’s materialities. It is also a valuable contribution for speaking across audiences who are often segregated into either practitioners, scholars, curators, or conservators.”*

—Rebecca Schneider, Professor of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies, Brown University

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