Lost to Museums? Changing Media, Their Worlds, and Performance

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Summary
From the perspective of museums and conservation, where does a work lie, how and where is it? This essay sets off to analyse Mark Rothko's Harvard Murals exhibited in the form of an augmented reality at the Harvard Art Museums in Cambridge, MA. With the help of this and further examples, it argues that the changeable character of artworks do not comply with traditional museum and its techniques of musealisation that privilege the idea of artworks as objects manifest in a physical matter. The traditional functionality of a museum has therefore been challenged. Accepting changeable nature of artworks, contemporary conservation does not return artworks to their past condition but actively takes part in their actualisation on the basis of the archive. Further artworks by Yoko Ono and Nam June Paik are understood in terms of their duration, slow and fast, while the museum and conservation acquire a particular relation to temporality.

Keywords
Actualisation; changeability; contingency; continuity; duration; museum; slow and fast art; vehicular and artistic medium

> Today, the only works that really count are those which are no longer works at all.
>
> [Theodor Adorno, *The Philosophy of Modern Music*, 1973]

Overture

The paintings comprise five large rectangular canvases, all the same heights but each a different width. They are abstract works—hues of bright red on reddish brown, and dark blue and brown intertwine in geometrical forms reassembling multiplied shapes of windows, or architectural frames. Yellowish walls contrast the paintings, as if this solid, monochrome background improves their visual effectiveness. I approach the paintings, contemplating their colors and examining their smell, which is remote, non-acting; sixty years between their creation and now, rendering the paintings dry and solid. Yet there is something uncanny about this setting, which is linked to the shadows cast by visitors on the paintings. The silhouette of my shadow reveals a slight discoloration on the canvases; it is not simply a subtraction of the environmental light, but a combination of different color temperatures

and intensities. I turn around to spot the light source. From the ceiling, large projectors light the canvases, evoking a feeling of discomfort. Are we, the viewers, being tricked by some virtual joke? I hold a white page of my notebook a few centimeters in front of a painting and discover an array of light spectra: in an area of bright violet, dots of yellow and red, while in dark violet, the dots are more intense—a combination of green, blue and violet. I cannot determine the actual colors of the paintings, which are only dimly visible in areas of the cast shadows; there is too strong a contrast with the illuminated surroundings.

Approaching 4pm, people begin gradually gathering in the gallery, as if a play is about to commence. Indeed, at 4 o'clock sharp, after a brief announcement, the projectors are turned off, panel by panel, and the gallery's conventional lights are turned on, before the expectant, collective gaze. The disappearing aural presence of the projectors' light reveals matt, faded surfaces, as if of different paintings. What exactly are we experiencing here? Paintings? Or, rather, a spectacle, a performance fulfilled in this room by means of activation of the painted surfaces by different types of light, and regulated by the cycles of their illumination? Is what counts today no longer artworks at all, no longer *paintings*, to paraphrase Adorno's suggestion from the *Philosophy of Modern Music*?[1] If this suggestion bears not only on modern music, might artworks be understood in terms of projects that, as Matthew Beaumont puts it, 'intervene critically in the process of art's reproduction and mediation'[2] and transform the role of the institutions harboring them? Are our claims to knowledge about these works not in some systematic way mistaken?

The above account describes my encounter with Mark Rothko's *Harvard Murals*, which I experienced during a visit to the exhibition *Mark Rothko's Harvard Murals* at the Harvard Art Museums in Cambridge, Massachusetts (November 16, 2014–July 26, 2015). Originally, the paintings were installed in the tenth-floor dining room of the Holyoke Center in Harvard (1964-75), a room decorated with large windows offering magnificent views over Boston and the Charles River. These windows were also the reason for the exposure of the paintings to direct sunlight and their subsequent discoloration and damage. This was aided by Rothko's technological experimentations with paint applications and substrates—nearly

always without protective varnishes—resulting, on the one hand, in an impressive mélange of fine, matte surfaces, but, on the other, contributing to the paintings' poor durability that resulted in the fading and discoloration of the paint.[3] (Figure 1 Mark Rothko, Panel Six of the *Harvard Murals*) After several decades in storage, *Harvard Murals* were thoroughly examined only recently and were subsequently displayed at the Fogg Museum/Harvard Art Museums utilizing a surprising technological solution. Because the paintings' discoloration cannot be solved by removing and replacing darkened and soiled varnishes or by retouching—which, according to Harvard's conservation scientist Jens Strenger always 'adds something to the surface,' and can therefore 'remove the artist's hand,' these traditional conservation methods are of no help.

The solution developed by Harvard researchers—called 'compensating illumination'—might essentially be classified as a form of *augmented* (or *mediated*) *reality* by which images generated by a computer and projectors are used. Inspired by experiments compensating for unremovable, yellowed varnishes on paintings,[4] the Harvard method entails the alteration of human cognition by the manipulation of a painting's colors with the help of light illumination. Although this method has been criticized by those who claim that paintings should seem to emanate light, rather than be illuminated by light,[5] it is interesting to examine the Harvard solution in the context of the paintings' larger staging—as a gallery installation illuminated with digital projectors. Just like a piece of installation art based on media technologies, the theoretically original appearance of Rothko's *Harvard Murals* seems to fully exist only during the time of activation, otherwise returning to their unfortunate present, faded and faint, disabled, similar to a piece of switched-off technology. Now, the paintings (and our perceptions of them) are not only enhanced by technology, but our understanding of the paintings is also marked irreversibly by a new artificial reality, a performance of that theorized originality.

Lost to museums?

Rather than venture further into the technicalities of the manipulation of light and prove its applicability in conservation, I am seeking an altogether different lineage. By devoting

intellectual labor to deciphering the laws that regulate the relations between the work, its medium, and its time and performance, I propose to think about this and other artworks described in this paper as irreversibly changeable, temporal and durational entities. These works challenge conservators and museum professionals when they enter collections and are musealized (transformed from their original context to a museological context), displayed and conserved.[6] Much has changed in conservation in recent decades and especially with the introduction of new forms of artistic expression since the 1960s; however, the traditional paradigm of conservation which presumes to fix objects in time by arresting change (intrinsic or extrinsic to them) resonates in the prevalent concept of a museum tied to a concept of safeguarding physical, static artifacts.[7] There are diverse reasons underlying thinking about artworks as static, stable and fixed, and I will only be able to touch upon a few of them. First, the economics of collecting accompanied by the system of values, which rests on the relation between the symbolic capital and its physical embodiment, might be one of the reasons. Unlike literary works, artworks are traditionally *objects*, they manifest themselves in physical matter. The art's seemingly enduring character guarantees that its value will be sustained. This value is expressed in the currency of invested labor on the side of the maker and in the monetary currency invested by a collector or a museum.[8] Second, the emergence of the idea of museums as institutions mandated with harboring, safeguarding, and presenting objects also contributed to thinking about artworks as static, stable and fixed entities. The origins of museums in classical antiquity are inextricably linked with the presence of physical objects, and their presence is still essential to contemporary museums. While the artworks collected by museums have changed dramatically over time, the general concept of the museum with regard to its function of collecting physical artifacts has remained largely the same over subsequent centuries. Third, the concept of a static object emerged as a result of the development of scientific conservation, which originated in archaeological conservation (the groundwork for which was laid in the museums' scientific laboratories by Friedrich Rathgen in Berlin and Edward Forbes at the Fogg Art Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts, among others).[9] This culture of conservation established the notions of an object and its 'original condition,' discernable by an (objective) analytical

approach.[10]

In this essay, 'lost to museums' signifies my interest in the ways artworks do not comply with the traditional objectives of museum collecting and conservation. According to the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, artworks do not simply disappear into the world but, rather, create their world.[11] Refusing singular trajectories or stable forms, artworks can be understood as archival entities that accumulate the past in the present. They represent dynamic archival intersections where past, present, and future interpenetrate.[12] The archive, here, serves as an epistemic tool that allows us to decipher cultural, social and political orders. In those terms, reading the works from a different perspective than materiality (in a strict sense) or iconography might tell us something about the ruling cultures and the attitudes of generations in charge. Such readings can inform us about the conditions of possibility for what enters the archive and what is prohibited from it.[13] Following this line of thought, perhaps it is not the original forms of artworks that are lost to museums, but rather—with museums' traditional orientation toward the past and attachment to 'objects-originals'— it is the museums that are lost, by attempting to impose a certain kind of an order on artworks in constant flux that resist conservation and preservation practices.

A painting, its actualization, and its performance

I have chosen to start off my account with a traditional art form, at least at its creation, in order to draw attention to the thin line between what have often been described as ephemeral works, and what appears at the first glimpse to be a stable, traditional, object (a painting or a sculpture). In my account, the *Harvard Murals* serve a double purpose. First, they demonstrate that in order to evoke what we imagine as a potential version of the past, a certain actualization—an enactment—must take place. Here, the actualization of *Harvard Murals* not only becomes an ephemeral multimedia spectacle brought back to life by new technology and the outstanding expertise of all the people involved in their reactivation; but also acknowledges the importance of the past and the condition in which the painting was

intended to be experienced by the artist. Deceived by the veil of easily deactivated illumination technology, one might miss the origination of this method in the concept of reversibility that has for long been standard in traditional conservation. In traditional conservation, reversibility posits a state to which an object can return based on the reversibility of the materials and processes employed by conservators to repair or consolidate damaged works. But there is another meaning to acting in reverse of the passage of time, which reveals a paradox – it is the challenge of 'restoring' a damaged work to a presupposed state of 'original' condition. The concept of reversibility is in theory a professionally responsible method of apparently reversing the effects of decay and aging (because nothing can ever become younger) while maintaining beneath or alongside the conservator's interventions, the remains of the damaged work. The damaged work and its conservation result in what may appear as the original work but is in fact an illusion based on a compilation of old (the work in its received conditions) and new (the conservator's interventions). Of course, the augmented reality 'applied' to *Harvard Murals* is a less invasive and elegant solution that a conventional manipulation of objects but it, too, subscribes to a similar logic of reversibility. As a result, a viewer believes s/he is experiencing the work as though it was at the time when it was created, rather than as a work 'repaired' along the lines that present-day specialists believe it probably appeared at some distant point in the past, at its imagined origins. Accordingly, the time of a work's creation and its appearance in the present are collapsed into the same moment of observation. For if we listen to Heidegger, '[w]orld-withdrawal and world-decay can never be undone. The works are no longer the same as they once were. It is they themselves, to be sure, that we encounter there, but they themselves are gone by.'[14] This statement can be understood as a reference not only to time, but also to the 'world.' Even if we could restore the object to its original condition, compensating illumination or using the technique of traditional retouching, we would not be able to restore its world, so it will always be different from 'how' (rather than 'what') it was.[15] Rather than being objective and ready to be discovered, the past is crafted creatively by conservation, contingent on the ruling culture and attitudes. What Michael Shanks observes regarding archaeology might be directly applied to conservation: 'what

archaeologists do is work with material traces, with evidence, in order to create something—a meaning, a narrative, an image—which stands for the past in the present.'[16] In that sense, conservation, rather than returning something to its past, might be grasped as a creative process of cultural production. Second, and in line with Heidegger's remark, the example of *Harvard Murals* elucidates how world-decay, and the accompanying degradation of all materials, is a logical part of the process of entropy characteristic of all matter. From the perspective of a long duration, the process of decline and restoration might be understood as a sort of a ceaseless, continuing, changing staging of objects and their surroundings in time.

Object, event, performance, process

Considered in this way a painting, a piece of performance art, a conceptual, iterant artwork, a piece of recurrent installation art, and media assemblage are not entirely different. A painting, or a sculpture—traditional artworks—might be seen as long events, not perceivable by a museum visitor, in which chemical-physical processes only gradually unfold over a long time span causing damage, degradation and decay. A well-conserved Rembrandt will have survived many generations, but, like all of the known universe, its ultimate duration is finite. So the painting's lifetime is clearly a longer or a stretched variant of an event, such as a piece of performance art, that disappears quickly and is therefore barely graspable by traditional conservation methods of documentation. Dieter Roth's series of chocolate gnomes, which were intended to degrade, or the series of his bunnies made entirely of natural, degrading materials, illustrate this problem. The finitude of Roth's pieces is clearly in—and on— view (Figure 2).

Museums contribute to the perception of longevity of objects by imposing other temporalities on them. In the desire to connect viewers with the past, objects in museums are often interpreted in terms that obscure their chronologically distant origins to make the objects more relevant to contemporary experience. The French philosopher Michel Foucault accordingly describes museums as heterotopias where the perpetual and indefinite

accumulation of time can occur in a single place.[17] Alternately, museums become places where certain experiences of such time are possible. A time capsule of sorts, the museum actively creates and maintains a unique temporality that affects (or 'conserves') the object by separating it from the physical dangers of the world with a wall of policies and regulations.

The dream of stability through conservation

Because things are born in time (and space) and a specific duration is inscribed in them,[18] to reflect on the status of artworks within the field of conservation and in the context of museums without taking their specific temporality into account seems inaccurate. It is the duration and persistence of an object's medium, as well as conservation interventions, that alters the object's reality.

It is time now for the durational characteristics of artworks to enter the theoretical agenda of conservation, and attempts have already been made to reflect them in its more recent, theoretical-reflective discourse, and associated museological discourse. This task is anything but simple. Having pursued materialist strategies for decades, traditional conservation was preoccupied with the physical care of artworks, stabilizing them, and attempting to transform them from their transient, changeable form to a more durable form. 'Durable' objects are more reliable. According to Michael Thompson's *Rubbish Theory* (1979), they increase in value and might even have an infinite time span[19]—a time span that exceeds a human's temporal duration, a *lived* time. Transient objects, in contrast, decrease in value over time because their life spans are shorter, finite. In museums, the valorization of an artwork depends on its physical presence—a motivation that not only lies behind the conservation of objects but the reason why ephemeral, short durational, or less-object-based works are rarely collected in the first place. If we, however, look at a painting or a sculpture from a durational perspective, as an effect of an artistic performance that resulted in its creation, the object that remains as a result of it is nothing other than a precious artifact valued for its origins.

The material substrate of *Harvard Murals* was retained and yet compensated by light, rather than replaced entirely by an augmented reality projected on empty canvases (or

no canvases altogether), because of the value of the authentic left-over that retains the trace of the past, even if dramatically changed. Does conservation, and the museum, in this sense, not *project*, both metaphorically and literally, the cultural value on a slowly fading painting?

The relativity of temporal duration: slow and fast art

Unlike traditional artworks such as painting or sculpture, which are subject to entropy and decay and which might be defined as 'slow art' due to the pace of their decline, performance, installation, and digital artworks might be classified as a sort of 'fast art' because they are typically created to be experienced for only very short durations of time before they 'end'.[20] Slow and fast would thus suspend the dichotomy of the ephemeral and the permanent. Slow art stands at the center of a traditional concept of the museum as a harbor of physical artifacts. Fast art challenges museums. It not only maintains different relationships with temporality than traditional objects, but also often defies a museum's ability to collect and maintain it as it was originally presented. (The exception here is of course the augmented reality of *Harvard Murals*, which became a hybrid construct of traditional paintings actualised by technology.) What exactly should enter the museum if the work moves through time constantly shedding its physical media and requiring continuously readjusted technological compensation?

If we accept change in artworks as a positive value with regard to both slow and fast art, the lives of artworks are marked by physical leftovers and residues. Artworks such as events, performances, and processes often require textual stabilization: scores, instructions, scripts, and testimonies. They also engender a vast number of objects and side products that act against their temporal passing. Documentation (film, video, photography, text), props, costumes and leftovers survive the event, ensuring that something tangible, legible, and visible remains. In these aesthetics of the temporary, materials are produced and amassed even if the work 'disappears.' In the process of musealization, these instructions and residues are absorbed by institutional collections like more traditional artifacts that may require conservation.

Conceptual persistence of artworks

In contrast to a great number of traditional artworks, which rely on their physical presence in their original materials, multimedia installations (including film and video works), and other iterant artworks exist only on the basis of an instruction or a score that must be installed, projected, or performed. This questions the traditional functionality of a museum as an institution harboring artworks as objects. Alternative media, outside their presentation, often do not possess a physical presence, but only documentation, a technical apparatus, or other means of realization. Such works exist as a transient entity, sharing characteristics with conceptual artworks. So for instance, Yoko Ono's *Instructions for Paintings* (created for the Sogetsu Art Center, Tokyo, May 1962)—one of the first forms of conceptual art in which the instructions 'summarize the painting-events in a way that makes them repeatable'—parallel many iterant works. Their repeatability conveys a certain lack of concern regarding the preservation of their material embodiment, thus questioning the function and mandate of museums. In the case of multimedia artworks, including film and video installations, often the museum acquires only a concept, as in the case of Nam June Paik's *Zen for Film* (1962-64).[21] The varieties of instantiations of these works—which materialize anew every time they are exhibited—constitute the totality of the artwork's existence. Such repeated, non-hierarchical artworks, over time, render each consecutive materialization of the work as significant and important as the preceding one. Let us now look at some examples.

Zen for TV (1963, Fig. 3) by Korean-American artist Nam June Paik is a television turned on its side and showing a single vertical line. The artwork epitomizes the effect of chance on its concept. The chance appeared in Paik's first solo exhibition, *Exposition of Music—Electronic Television*, at Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal in 1963 as a result of Paik's creative response to an accident: two televisions intended for the exhibition were damaged while being transported to the venue in Wuppertal. One of them was named after its manufacturer (*Rembrandt Automatic*, 1963) and the other was called *Zen for TV*.[22]

In *Zen for TV* the accident resulted in a technical failure and the television thus produced nothing more than a horizontal line. Assessing the broken monitor, Paik simply turned the monitor on its side, making the line vertical, in the process achieving a reduction and stillness characteristic of Zen aesthetics. What could have signified non-functionality was recomposed and given new meaning. Paik's response based on a chance incident paralleled Marcel Duchamp's in the final state of his *Large Glass* (1915–23, in which Duchamp accepted the incident that caused the glass panel to shutter as a part of the work). Paik's acceptance of chance led to *Zen for TV*'s final form; it was not (pre)conceived in any conventional sense but rather was an adaptation to a given situation. Unlike traditional art based on skill and knowledge of fabrication techniques, where an artwork proceeds in steps from genesis to end result, Paik's technique is retroactive: the determination of what the work becomes is a result of contingent response to accident or chance.

Since its premiere at the groundbreaking *Exposition of Music—Electronic Television* in 1963, *Zen for TV* has seemed to perform every time anew as a result of the use of many different types of televisions, TV cabinets and monitors, such that its many iterations could well serve as a survey of the evolution of video-display technology from the 1960s to the present. Additionally, beyond these obvious shifts in the work's sculptural appearance, other changes have occurred on the screen(s). Because of the originating technical failure, the image on the screen is actually a full TV picture compressed into a thin line of light. If this is an image, what does it show? Or, more aptly, what does it conceal?

Like a number of other manipulated devices in Paik's 1963 exhibition, *Zen for TV* originally transmitted an analogue German TV broadcast.[23] That broadcast was present in the compressed line on the screen. 'The TV is not really broken, there is still a picture collapsed in there,' explained Paik's collaborator Paul Garrin[24]—a fact that, in addition to the sculptural value of the CRT monitors, renders any exact reinstantiation of the work impossible. This is owing to at least two reasons: On the one hand, using the present day digital TV and broadcast would render it a 'thing' of the 2010s (rather than of 1963), and, on the other, using a current plasma or LCD screen would deprive the work of its internal logic

of manipulated circuits. (We could transpose the image of the line to other display technologies, but they would never be able to emulate the mechanical specificity of a CRT).

Paik produced instructions for *Zen for TV*, which, just as in the case of other of his works, were arbitrary, and their execution required a highly developed knowledge of and expertise in Paik's production processes and habits. The artist's tone in these instructions could suggest otherwise, however:

> 4/12 can be done—redone—in any new TV set.… [unreadable] as follows. Cut off vertical deflection unit and turn TV set 90 degree, dial on the bottom. There are two ways to cut off vertical unit 1. Take off vertical output tube (jump the heater pins) OR 2. Keep all tubes and buy a similar deflection coil and connect the original deflection line to the new coil and waste the power there. 3. Anyway … [unreadable] PAIK.[25]

These instructions can also be said to translate the concept of the work into technical operability. But what is most important here is that they offer a link to conceptual practices, such as Ono's *Instruction Paintings*, and, indirectly, create a conceptual bridge to musical performance executed on the basis of a score or script. A score or script renders a work indefinitely re-executable, and thus, it might be said, guarantees its survival.

And yet at the request of Gilbert Silverman, who acquired an iteration of *Zen for TV* from Paik, Paik inscribed the number of work's 'edition'--4/12—on the monitor case (it is now in the Silverman Fluxus Collection at the Museum of Modern Art, New York). Similar to Duchamp's gesture of conferring the status of art on an everyday object to suggest 'art' is not intrinsic but an every day object can become an artwork when it carries the artist's signature, Paik signed *Zen for TV* to elevate it for aesthetic contemplation—a TV set—a technical readymade. From another perspective, this inscription assures how the object is to be treated and preserved, as 'unique', satisfying the deeply-rooted precondition for a

collection, or a museum: to acquire only rare works that are preservable in their material *physis*.

Let us turn to other examples of Ono's artwork. The exhibition *One Woman Show* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (May 17–September 7, 2015), contained Ono's *Painting to be Stepped On* (1960), upon which audiences were invited to tread and *Painting for the Wind* (1961) which had to be materialised anew in the form of exhibition replicas. The immateriality of these pieces, which initially existed in the form of instructions, might seem to resist art museums' traditions of exhibiting only unique, original objects. They also call attention to the necessity of a certain material condition of display, presenting only those objects that came directly from the artist's hand—perhaps also a reason why Paik decided to bind his *Zen for TV* to a particular TV casing by autographing it. From a different perspective, however, following the logic of re-performance, if Ono's paintings can be re-executed in an attempt to provide access to the aesthetic experience of the past (conditioned by the viewer's interaction with them), why is so much value attached to the conservation of material objects?

Here, Rothko's *Harvard Murals* stand as a logically comparable example. Although different from Ono's *Instruction Paintings*, because, from the outset, the murals lacked instructions and are bound to a singular execution's physicality, as works whose originality can only be experienced via highly specialized illumination technologies, they now exist less as objects and more as performances of their technologically augmented physical qualities. Is not this experiment with the *Harvard Murals* a first step toward a virtual experience of art, a substitution for the physical object? How would that change the concept of the museum? Paik, whose prophecies too often came true, maintained '…in the future the only art that survives will have no gravity at all.' It seems that the authentic object, which, for a long time, validated a piece as art, might soon become superfluous.

Vehicular and artistic mediums

The contradictions of concept and material in the discussed works might also be linked with

the concept of vehicular and artistic mediums. I derive this terminology from the analytic philosopher David Davies, who discusses the relationships between the 'physical' or 'vehicular' (paint and canvas, body) and the 'artistic' medium (brush strokes, articulated steps, or a distinctive vocabulary that enables an artist to perform an artistic statement).[26] According to Davies, 'a particular artistic statement is articulated in virtue, in part, of the artistic medium in which the artist is working in her manipulation of the vehicular medium.'[27] To put it simply, the artistic medium mediates between what the artist does and what the work says. Although Davies posits that much recent art is not articulated in a physical form—and thus refuses an application of the term vehicular medium— I will allow myself a generalization and argue that vehicular media emerged in museums as an effect of a historic practice. Accordingly, I will assume that a vehicular medium might become a physical carrier of the artistic idea—an artifact valued for the history of its origins, an object-remnant, or relic, lending itself to preservation and presentation within the standards of Western museums. Museums have traditionally required that an artwork materializes to what is comparable with Davies's vehicular medium. It might be said that, for the purposes of musealization and preservation, the artworks' artistic media have become less interesting that vehicular, object-bound media.

Perhaps then, artistic media might be compared with performances during which objects might or might not be produced. An articulated artistic medium might be bound with the objecthood of a vehicular medium (an artwork's object-sphere) by means of instructions, written or resting in an implied realm of knowledge about a work. Ono's *Instruction Paintings* would belong to this last category, whereas Rothko's *Harvard Murals* would exemplify the vehicular sphere of artistic medium. The concept of *Zen for TV*, instead, would be an example of pure artistic medium that became limited to its vehicular sphere in the process of its musealization.

The distinctions between artistic and vehicular media are complex and the intricacies of artworks' lives might challenge them. So for instance, Bruce Nauman's *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner around the Perimeter of a Square* (1967-68), a work that was initially conceived as a performance filmed on a16mm film projection, but is now experienced as a

transposition from a filmic medium to a digital medium.[28] Because the artist wished to preserve the sonic experience of the film projection, the digital projection was enhanced with the recorded sound of the 16mm film projector creating a new reality. Paik's aforementioned *Zen for Film*, in which the artist ran an empty 16mm film leader through a film projector to collect dust and smudges, became materialized in uncountable projections executed on the basis of an instruction. It also manifested in a number of materialized, fixed, object forms such as Fluxus editions and a film relic from the 1960s.[29] Exhibited over the last 50 years in museums worldwide, *Zen for Film*'s changing manifestations included a 16mm film projection accompanied by the film relic, that contained traces of historic projections, enclosed in a film can; a stand-alone projection of the film; and an 8mm film projection accompanied by the boxed Fluxus edition (containing fragments of *16mm leader*). This variety of presentation forms can be further enriched as various venues alter the aesthetics of the projection apparatus. The complexity of *Zen for Film* was even more evident when plans were made for the filmic relic—which ceased to be projected due to its fragile condition—to be digitized, and thus *conserved* balancing the procedures of media art conservation with older museums' preservation standards. *Zen for Film* thus epitomizes the impact of the traditional museum concept on an evanescent, conceptual work. The artistic medium of *Zen for Film* became overshadowed, if not suppressed, by the physical vehicles of its musealized forms.

The division between the vehicular and the artistic medium may also be put to the test because of the process of ageing and decay. In the process of ageing, an effect of entropy inherent to all physical matter, the vehicular medium—Rothko's canvases, Paik's TV case, or Ono's replicated paintings—may drift away from the form the artist initially intended for it, as all physical manifestations of artworks are objects that succumb to wear and tear. Therefore, the vehicular medium, which, according to museum-collecting practices, stands for the 'original' work, cannot guarantee its proper representation. Here, *Harvard Murals* offer an appealing example of how augmented reality manipulates the vehicular medium to approximate Rothko's artistic medium. Although bound to the monitor casing inscribed by the artist, *Zen for TV* 's inner life has been modified on the occasion of the exchange of the

electron tube. And, from an inverted perspective, Ono's *Painting to be Stepped On* and *Painting for the Wind* became realized by the way of creation of exhibition copies, which, given that the work is the realization of the instruction rather than the instruction itself as written out by Ono—can clearly represent a vehicular medium, even if it stemmed from Ono's hand. Interestingly, for the installation of Nauman's video, the hand of the artist is not necessary to exhibit Nauman's *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner*. In this respect, multimedia works of art, as I have argued elsewhere,[30] follow a very complex set of laws and strategies.

Conclusion

As I have shown, certain types of artworks and installations refuse to comply with the established system of collectable, musealizable objects established by traditional museums. Their refusal of fixed forms and monotonous trajectories may result in their being lost to these systems. So perhaps, rather than focusing only on safeguarding the artworks' physical properties alone, and in light of an increasing number of alternative media utilized by twentieth-century and contemporary artists, museums in the future will expand their principles of stewardship by paying more focused attention to the complex ecology in which an artwork was created and exists, and to the relations between the work, its medium, and its performance, in order to gain, instead of lose, them for museums.

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List of figures

Figure 1: Mark Rothko, *Panel Six of the Harvard Murals*, 1960. Oil on canvas, 104 5/8 x 91 3/4 in. (265.8 x 233.1 cm) © 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Figure 2: Dieter Roth, *Bunny-dropping-bunny (Karnickelköttelkarnickel)*, 1968, published 1972-82. Multiple of straw and rabbit droppings, overall: 18.5 x 20.5 x 10.5 cm. Publisher: the artist, and Eat Art Galerie, Düsseldorf. Fabricator: Walter Moser, Basel. Edition: 250. Committee on Prints and Illustrated Books Fund. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, U.S.A. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. Copyright Dieter Roth Estate. Courtesy Dieter Roth Foundation, Hamburg and Hauser&Wirth

Figure 3: Nam June Paik, *Zen for TV*. Authorized version, 1990. Video-installation, 1963/90. Monitor 67.5 x 47.5 x 38.5 cm. Inv. NG 1/93. Photo: Jens Ziehe. Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany. Photo: bpk Bildagentur. Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. Copyright Nam June Paik Estate

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[1] Theodor Adorno, *The Philosophy of Modern Music. The Philosophy of Modern Music*, transl. by Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (London: Sheed and Ward, 1973).

[2] Drew Milne, 'Processual Performance: Critical Notes on Adorno's Autonomous Artwork,' in *As Radical as Reality Itself; Essay on Marxism and Art for the 21st Century*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont, Andrew Hemingway, Esther Leslie and John Roberts (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), pp. 347-366 (p. 349).

[3] Rothko prepared his own paints by adding the pigments red and ultramarine, and mixing them with animal glue, egg yolk and egg white in varied proportions.

[4] For the initial idea of compensating illumination, see Raymond H. Lafontaine, 'Seeing through a Yellow Varnish: A Compensating Illumination System,' *Studies in Conservation*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Aug., 1986), pp. 97-102.

[5] See Louis Menand. 'Watching Them Turn Off Rothkos,' *The New Yorker*, 1 April, 2015 http://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/watching-them-turn-off-the-rothkos [accessed 5 June 2016].

[6] Others have discussed changeable media in museums: Pip Laurenson, with regard to the so-called time-based media art, and Glenn Wharton, with regard to installation art.

[7] Such concept of a museum is often compared to a tomb, crypt or a mausoleum. See Pascal Gielen, *The Murmuring of the Artistic Multitude: Global Art, Memory and Post Fordism* (Amsterdam: Antennae, Valiz, 2010). For musealization, see Peter van Mensch, 'Museology and Management: Enemies or Friends? Current Tendencies in Theoretical Museology and Museum Management in Europe.' In *Museum Management in the 21st Century*, edited by E. Mizushima (Tokyo: Museum Management Academy, 2004), pp. 3-19.

[8] The apparent instability of video, film, computer-based arts, and visual arts performance is one of the reasons why these genres are underrepresented in traditional collections.

[9] Hanna B. Hölling, 'Conservation and Contingency: On Realms of Theory and Cultures of Practice.' Paper presented at the colloquium Art and Knowledge in Pre-Modern Europe, Max Planck Institute for the History of Knowledge, Berlin, November 23, 2016.

[10] Caroline Villers, 'Post Minimal Intervention,' *The Conservator* 28 (2004), pp. 3-10.

[11] Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art,' in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), pp.15-86.

[12] For the concept of the archive and its importance in the conservation discourse, see Hanna B. Hölling, *Paik's Virtual Archive: Time, Change, and Materiality in Media Art*, Oakland: University of California Press, 2017, 141-169.

[13] This concept recalls Michel Foucault's historical a priori, a technical term used in his *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1976) to describe the collection of material traces left behind by a historical period and culture. From this collection of traces, one can deduce the episteme of the period. Michael Foucault. 'Of Other Spaces (1967): Heterotopias,' translated by Jay Miskowiec. <http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html> [accessed January 10, 2013].

[14] Heidegger, 'Origin', p. 40.

[15] In suggesting that it is only the object-being of an artwork that the art industry, and conservators, may access, Heidegger distinguishes the work-being (artworks as standing-in-themselves) from the object-being.

[16] Michael Shanks and Randall H. McGuire, 'The Craft of Archaeology, '*American Antiquity*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (Jan. 1996), pp. 75-88.

[17] Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces'.

[18] See Grosz, 'The Thing,' in *The Object Reader*, eds. Fiona Candlin and Raiford Guins (London, Routledge, 2009), pp. 124-138.

[19] Michael Thompson, *Rubbish Theory: The Creation and Destruction of Value* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 7.

[20] A consideration of the temporal aspect of artworks evokes Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's division between spatial and temporal art (Lessing, 'Laocoön') and the critique of that division in media and art theories (for instance, by McLuhan. See Richard Cavel, *McLuhan in Space: A Cultural Geography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), p.118). Spatial art has qualities similar to temporal art but might be viewed as 'slow' rather than 'fast.' See chapter 'Temporal Artworks' in Hölling, *Paik's Virtual Archive*, pp. 122-22.

[21] For an extensive analysis of *Zen for Film* from an aesthetic, ontological, and conservation angle, see Hanna B. Hölling, *Revisions—Zen for Film* (New York: Bard Graduate Center; distributed by University Press, 2015).

[22] *Zen for TV* was lost in 1967 and reconstructed by Paik for the collector Wolfgang Hahn in 1975. It is now part of the MUMOK collection in Vienna. The Vienna version of *Zen for TV* carries the label of the original and was a basis for the creation of two further replicas (The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection at the MoMA also holds *Zen for TV*). See Nam June Paik's notes (1983) in Jon Hendricks, ed. *Fluxus Etc. / Addenda II: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection* (Pasadena: California Institute of Technology and Baxter Art Gallery, 1983), p. 285.

[23] Dieter Daniels, 'Television–Art or Anti-Art? Conflict and Cooperation Between the Avant-Garde and the Mass Media in the 1960s and 1970s,' *Media Art Net* http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/themes/overview_of_media_art/massmedia/29/ [accessed January 27, 2015].

[24] Paul Garrin, in discussion with the author. New York, December 2010. There is actually a simple trick to remedy this: if one shakes quickly one's head, the image will be deflected.

[25] For the instruction, see Jon Hendricks, ed., *Fluxus Etc.: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection* (Bloomfield Hills, MI: Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum, 1981), pp. 285–88.

[26] David Davies, *Art as Performance* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 58–59. According to Davies, the nature of the medium is mediation. In developing his views, he analyses the distinctions between the vehicular and artistic mediums proposed by philosophers Joseph Margolis, Monroe C. Beardsley and Jerold Levinson.

[27] Davies, *Art*, p. 59.

[28] In *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner* Nauman recorded himself performing walking around the square for the duration of a 16mm film reel. The work was viewed at the Contemporary Art Department of the Fogg Museum/Harvard Museums in June 2015, played back from a Blue-ray Disc.

[29] See Hölling, *Revisions*, 2015.

[30] Hölling, *Paik's Virtual Archive*, 2017.