

时间 / 九间

Time

Based...Non-

Places

The 3rd Shenzhen

Independent Animation

Biennale

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# 白南准《禅之电影》的美学变化

汉娜·霍玲  
2016

“《禅之电影》到底是什么？”在2014年秋初有人向我提出这个问题。那时候我正在为一个名叫《复习》的展览进行一场预备会议，而该展览则会展出白南准的《禅之电影》（1962 - 1964），一部“空荡荡”的投影电影作品。虽然我们在此之前已经开过多次会，但是当我们谈到那次展览的主要和唯一作品的时候，我们还是感到一脸茫然。

策展安排工作从来都不是一件简单的事情。只有在极少的情况下会遇到一件优差：只要把一些能够讲述动人故事的物件拼凑在一起就能完成的展览。而组织展览也有可能遇上如何将浩瀚的哲学挑战注入展览空间这样的困难。这也是展示《禅之电影》时遇到的问题，将一件艺术作品呈现在观众眼前所引起的艰辛问题——以一己之力可能解答的问题，或者即使能够解答，答案永远是不完整和有缺陷的。那《禅之电影》究竟是什么？如果没有人问我这个问题，我很有把握知道它是什么。但如果我要向任何人解释这个问题，请允许我引用圣奥古斯丁的话，我不知道。

到底《禅之电影》是一件因为其物料独特——一件“多重”物件或是一件遗迹，而受人尊敬的艺术品物件？还是一个想法，一个概念，或者是一件事件，一场表演，还是一个过程？我们对它的判断是根据它过去的状态，还是因着重重新诠释的过程而产生。它是如何受到观念上和形态上的改变？总而言之，这件艺术品到底是什么，它是怎样形成和属于哪个时代。

《复习 - 禅之电影》是一本由纽约的巴德研究生中心和芝加哥大学出版社于2015年9月出版的书籍，它对以上问题进行了探索。《禅之电影》，又名《1号溶解胶片》，是美籍韩裔艺术家白南准最具影响力的作品之一。这件作品的创作时间是1960年代初，它的主要内容是放映一卷空白的胶卷影片，当放置在投影机里的胶卷开始变旧，观众就会看见一件不断演变的作品。由于我展示的这件作品的易变性，它推翻了有人认为艺术可以只有一种单一解读的说法。

上述的这本书以《禅之电影》为主要关注对象，从它的表现手法、保存档案和延续性这几个角度去挑战一些关于这个作品的假设。从这个多方面的角度以及对相类似作品的潜在意义，《复习 - 禅之电影》主要探讨了《禅之电影》的表达手法：这不光是（相对）短暂地展示物件而已，同时也影响了艺术作品如何被理解、记载以及在未来如何再次获得关注。《复习 - 禅之电影》一书探索《禅之电影》的存在模式，并且关注科技更新换代和重新解读如何为了一件作品的身份设置框架。针对一些像《禅之电影》这种不断拆解和重新组装的装置作品，关于它的制度化、展示和传播都成为了影响它的存在的主要问题。像这一类牵涉到复述的艺术作品，作品未来的维护以及与观察息息相关的使命都和策展的问题密不可分。相反的，策展本身也不可能回避作品维护保养所带来的挑战。作品的维护保养就像“作品”本身一样成为了另一样东西；它考究了艺术作品在概念上和物质上的延续性，而不是仅仅对眼前的物件产生联系。

紧接下来，我将附上几篇来自《复习 - 禅之电影》的段落，曾于美国纽约巴德研究生中心画廊的同名展览中展出（展期为2015年9月17日至2016年2月22日）。这篇论文的部分章节也曾出现在我发表的文章《改变的美学》，以及曾于《扩展领域中的媒体》的项目网站中刊登。

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你说：眼前的就是真实的世界。但其实它不是，它会变化！它会动，它会改变！它不会因为我们而停止改变……它比我们想象的更流动。当你说现实世界“自然呈现自己”，就代表你已经更接近这个现实；那代表它并不是以物件的形式存在在那里。这个真实的世界并不是一个物件。它是一个过程。（Cage 1981:80）

以上的文字来自约翰·凯奇，20世纪其中一位最具影响力的前卫派作曲家、音乐理论家、作家和艺术家。他的话语提醒我们这个精神物理世界经历的变化。这个变化与物件和艺术作品的固定性以及自我抑制恰好相反，而这个议题常常被忽略，特别是当我们在分析扩展领域中的对话，其中包括了展示手法和策展惯例。很多时候，这些惯例都会假定物件一定程度的固定性或者努力去营造这种固定性。

透过这篇论文，我提议重新回顾一些艺术和维护理论方面的隐性和明确概念，它们造就了一种静止物件的概念，其中特别突出了白南准的《禅之电影》（1962 - 1964），又名《1号溶解胶片》中的物质性。激进派对于我的研究一直提供了非常丰富的基础，因为它在表演艺术的发展上扮演了先驱者的角色，它对物件的状态提出的质疑以及它对时间性和期间的关注等。

## 从传统到新的概念

在过去很长的一段时间里，艺术理论和维护理论都是建基在一件静止、稳定、独特和真实的物件。在维护的论述和实践上，对于物件的理解与传统的做法是密不可分，后者视艺术品为独特的物件，一般只存在单独一个媒介并代表了一个（个人）作者的意图。由于传统维护的目的是让“物件”保持稳定，任何形式的改变则被视为是负面的，因此它们往往会被隐藏和或被制止。这对于思考维护艺术作品的潜在时间概念也有影响。由于和改变的负面层面相连，时间被视为熏黑照片的元凶（威廉·贺加斯），也是漆层泛黄、裂开和褪色的元凶。时间的理念和时间与物件状态之间关系的悖论导致有人尝试将物件回归到最早的状态，与此同时颠覆时间的线性概念。在上世纪中陆续出现可变的艺术作品后，维护理论随之也开始改变。在这个领域里出现的一些新思维主要是以两种形式出现——恒久和短暂，而存在于这两种状态下的艺术作品在概念化和处理上都有所不同。

对艺术作品的理解在1950年代末开始发生转变，对于艺术到底是什么提出了不同的概念。可是在此以前，艺术理论论述主要建基在静止艺术物件这个令人质疑的名称上。自1950年代末开始，艺术作品渐渐与动作、表演、事件和活动产生关联。“‘艺术’作为一件作品不是因为它能持之以恒地存在，而是因为它发生了。”这是德国艺术理论家和心理学家弗雷德里希·沃尔弗拉姆·霍伊巴赫提出的观点。关于时间长度和暂时性的理念撕裂了艺术历史的叙述以及让理解艺术物件的进程绕了弯路，特别影响了当时对油画的一些艺术评论。美国评论家哈罗德·罗森伯格曾尝试透过人工制品的“物质属性”与绘画行为的角度去理解一幅画（罗森伯格1952）。与这幅画相关的事件产生了一系列行动所衍生的物质证据。阿伦·卡普洛在他的著作中有受到罗森伯格的影响并对杰克逊·波洛克做出评论，他从结束发生的角度去理解波洛克的作品（卡普洛2003 [1958]）。一幅画是正在“发生”（它

的状态从一个动名词转为一个动词) (麦鲁尔 2007:15), 而一件艺术作品“完成了”。作为 1960 年代最多才多艺的艺术倾向之一, 激浪派也对“艺术物件”作为一个静止实体和其代表的状态提出了强烈的质疑。在激浪派出现之后, 艺术成为了一个自己动手做的现实, 而不是一个自己动手做的物件。富功能性而神圣不可侵犯的物件, 艺术物件作为一件商品以及它历史的载体, 这一切都是当时与激浪派关联的艺术家所否定的 (即使这个意念在表演商品化的后期再次回归)。从《禅之电影》这个例子, 我们可以看到艺术成为了正在发生和转折, 一件艺术品是处于永久的无常状态。

## 艺术作品

《禅之电影》是一部由白南准于 1962 至 1964 年间创作的电影艺术作品。看上去很简单, 白南准的创作拥有马塞尔·杜尚现成品一般的风格: 作品的构成是一个空白的 16 毫米片头透过投影机在放映。虽然最早只是一个概念, 而不是物件的布局安排, 这部作品最早的构思是要与一件特定的展示器械连在一起, 一个电影投影机。投影机决定了作品的行为并且产生一场视觉表演, 而诸如积累的灰尘、划痕和痕迹这样的变化在这场表演中扮演着极其重要的角色。《禅之电影》倚重拼装的美学: 白南准的创作利用了一部传统和普遍使用的电影片头, 以及无处不在的模拟胶片投影机, 成就了他这部伟大杰作。用的越久越好, 指的是放映用的胶片, 长期使用导致的退化正代表了作品本身物料的存在状态, 以及白南准就电影媒介在实验和解构电影院中的想法。

《禅之电影》肯定曾让乔治·麦西纳斯 (1931 - 1978) 看得入迷, 他自称是一名激浪派的代表人物和组织力量以及一名电影文化的爱好者。麦西纳斯在家里制造了大量的激浪派包, 他将大量的空白胶片片头放置在几个从纽约运河大街上买回来的塑料盒子里。透过这个行动, 来自激浪派包的《禅之电影》出现了: 它确实保留了白南准最初的概念 (一部可以投影的电影), 但它同时也变成了另一样东西, 一件可以收藏的手工艺品。除此之外, 麦西纳斯还转换了《禅之电影》的简单逻辑, 在一部投影机上映一段空白的片头而且没有固定的时长, 把它转换成有一个有固定时长的溶解胶片节目。他的其中一部作品《溶解胶片选集》(1962 - 1970) 收录了 37 部溶解胶片作品, 它们出自艺术家如乔治·布瑞安希特、迪克·希金斯、小野洋子和沃尔夫·沃斯特德。这套选集的开首就是《禅之电影》, 取名《禅之电影第一溶解胶片白南准》。在这部影片里, 艺术作品的过程主角, 它留下的痕迹和不确定性的投影时长都被固定了 (虽然这并不影响这个新的媒介按照自己的方式出现损耗和老化)。

将《禅之电影》调换到激浪派包, 然后再被选入《电影选集》, 这一切都和麦西纳斯对于如何发布激浪派艺术作品的意识形态以及他的左倾政治理念有关。对于麦西纳斯而言, 艺术创作应该让所有人都能参与并且使用手上可用最简单的途径。从另一个角度看, 白南准也对佛教禅学的质朴、它对艺术作品在执行上赋予的极小重要性以及对物料本质的重视 (一件艺术品在艺术家来到现场开始创作以前就已经是一件自然的艺术品) 深感兴趣。《禅之电影》的早期身份可能源自它从白南准最早的构思 (一部空白的影片在投影机上映) 转折到麦西纳斯后来的解读 (《禅之电影》成为了激浪派包以及溶解胶片选集的一部分)。这个过程不但动

摇了一件静止物件的概念, 并且对单一作者论提出了质疑。而《禅之电影》之后的一些转折则主要跟它和博物馆之间的关系有关。

## 令人烦恼的多样性

《禅之电影》早已被多家知名博物馆纳入收藏, 其中包括位于纽约的现代艺术博物馆、巴黎的乔治·蓬皮杜国家艺术文化中心、美国哈佛艺术博物馆内的福格艺术博物馆、明尼亚阿波利斯的沃克艺术中心以及多家其他的博物馆。近来这部艺术作品大多以 16 毫米的格式进行放映, 或以 8 毫米的格式进行放映 (应该是源自对平头尺寸的错误解读), 也有以激浪派包里的影片出现, 以遗留电影胶片的形式摆放在现代艺术博物馆西尔弗曼激浪派收藏, 还有以数字档案的形式出现。互联网用户也可以在 YouTube、UbuWeb 和 Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI) 的数字档案库上观看它的数字版本。

在我进行研究的过程中, 《禅之电影》以许多不同的形式出现。例如, 位于纽约的古根海姆博物馆将《禅之电影》与一批 1960 年代的电影胶片一同以投影的方式展出 (第三思维: 美国艺术家思考亚洲, 1860 - 1989, 2009 年 1 月 30 日至 4 月 19 日), 而利物浦泰特美术馆则从《溶解电影选集》中选取一个数字档案进行放映 (白南准: 影像艺术家、表演艺术家、作曲家和远见, 2010 年 12 月 17 日至 2011 年 3 月 13 日)。现代艺术博物馆则以 16 毫米的格式循环放映《禅之电影》(永不沉寂: 为约翰·凯奇配乐 3'44", 2013 年 10 月 12 日至 2014 年 6 月 22 日), 他们最近并不鼓励透过投影的方式展出电影胶片。很多时候观众在画廊里看到的只是激浪派包的版本, 那只代表了一系列收藏的主意, 但缺乏了代表白南准想法的电影诠释。

乍看之下, 白南准影片作品的存在多样性可以说是没有止境。因此, 当这部作品进行展出的时候, 标准的艺术历史探寻路线并不足以充分探讨它所代表的一切。虽然只要从白南准的遗属和或其中一家收藏他的作品博物馆获得许可即可展出《禅之电影》, 我们该如何看待《禅之电影》许多外观上的变体, 来自 1960 年代的胶片, 以及最近出现的残余影片? 以上提及的作品, 它们都能算是真正的《禅之电影》吗?

到底《禅之电影》是否可以保留? 当作品以投影的方式展出, 出借人只是单纯地将指引交给了借用人 (借用人有责任按照指引安排投影和片头的摆放)。因此, 也可以说在这里其实并没有可以保存的事物。但如果我们仔细审视自 1960 年代保存至今的电影胶片, 它的保留可能代表了对物质痕迹的一种联系, 对有形、稳定物件的保留。来自激浪派包的《禅之电影》可以说有着截然不同的历史, 它也似乎符合了保留唯物者的意识形态, 这些电影自始至终没有放映过, 它们只是单纯地被安放在塑料盒子里。

如果我们不深入探索更多关于《禅之电影》本质和行为的问题, 它既不能被展示也不能被保留。它到底是不是一件基于作为手工艺品的本质和物料特殊性——倍数物件或遗迹物件——而值得尊敬的物件? 它到底是一个想法、一个概念还是一场电影时间、一场空白影片的表演 (传统表演意义上的主题被器械所取代), 还是一个痕迹积累和退化的过程? 我们对它的判断是根据它过去的状态, 还是因着

重新诠释的过程而产生。它是如何受到观念上和形态上的改变？总而言之，这件艺术品到底是什么，它是如何形成和属于哪个时代。

虽然如果我要尝试在论文中解答以上的问题肯定会因为篇幅有限而失败告终，而《重温—禅之电影》就这些问题有着更深入的论述。我认为《禅之电影》可变的角色反映了1960年代当时的时代以及对演出为主的关注。另外，我认为《禅之电影》的潜在展示多样性所造成的困境反映了恒久和无常之间的辩证，而这一切透过对可收藏物质物件的寄托以及保留静止物件的热情得以阐明。

### 恒久与无常之间的二分法

在考虑艺术作品的时候不可能回避物质性的时间性。在这个语境中，我不可避免地会想问到底怎么样的艺术作品是无常的。物件保持恒久的理想和保持艺术作品一直存在都和博物馆的原则密不可分。但为什么会这样？为什么物件需要被保持恒久不变？恒久与无常的区分到底是从何而来，而我们如何利用这个二分法去考虑艺术作品？

我的假设是这个二分法是源自把艺术作品理解成处在某个时间内、某个时长内的事物，而对时间的理解则是对人类世界的某种持久力的切入。同样的，这个问题也可能和维护与博物馆的惯例有关，一名维护者或一名策展人的生命周期并不足以掌握一件旷世杰作的时间流逝。因此，这件作品必须被永久维护，或至少能够涵盖人类一生的时长。我个人认为这也是一件稳定和“可维护”的物件意念的源头，这一切也决定了传统的维护理论。

在考虑艺术作品的时间层面就会联想到戈特霍尔德·埃夫莱姆·莱辛对于空间与时间艺术的区分，以及他对媒介的批判和艺术理论。诚如我之前提出的观点，空间艺术与时间艺术有相似的属性，看起来可能比较慢而不是快。这种对媒介的时间定义让我们可以辨别它对时间的反应是积极还是被动的，以及区别媒介是如何发生变化的。像媒体装置、表演以及与时间体验紧密关联的事件这类艺术作品会发生较快的变化，像油画和雕塑这类较慢的艺术作品对时间的反应则较为被动，它们一般以所使用物料的退化、衰退和老化呈现改变。透过电影的表现，《禅之电影》总是在发生物质上的变化而这使它成为一件对时间发生积极反应的艺术作品。在手工艺品的层面上，激浪派包和电影胶片都接受了时间的流逝，电影胶片上显而易见的脆化、标签和塑料套管变的泛黄。

在讨论过上述的例子以及《禅之电影》，我认为与其继续探索恒久和无常的对比，接下来我会从艺术作品时长的相对论的角度去重新看待艺术作品。

### 相对时长的无常

“问题并不是短暂和永恒之间的对比。万物皆不是永恒。关键的问题是无常的相对时长”。这是英国表演艺术家斯图尔特·布里斯利的观点。按照他的这个观点，可能我们应该回避恒久和无常的二元论，改为关注改变的美学和属性，对于短期和长期艺术作品发生改变视为正面的价值。

为了阐明我的观点，我想指出由于《禅之电影》每次都可以透过一部新的投影机 and 片头重新安装，它其实符合了表演和活动的周期性、正在发生和重复的逻辑。

艺术作品的活动、表演和过程经常都需要有文本的稳定：配乐、指引、剧本、见证和叙述。虽然没有证据证明白南准曾经制定了如何放映《禅之电影》的指引，但它的指引其实是隐性存在的（由白南准的遗属、他的策展人和合作方传递），它也有纸质的版本，譬如来自现代美术博物馆的借用规范。

艺术作品的活动、表演和过程同时也产生了大量与时间流逝产生对抗的物件和副产品，仿如它们的“死亡驱动”一般。任何形式的记录（电影、录像、照片和文字）、道具、服装和剩余物、必需品和遗留物都填补了活动本身的缺席，确保了与有形、可读和可见世界的关系。在这里，改变的美学可能被消失的美学所取代，当产生的物料积累到一定的程度作品反而“消失”了。这个缺陷产生了一种希望保留和收藏的冲动，从而扩大了艺术作品的所有积累档案。诚如弗洛伊德的恋物癖理论一样针对物件产生的情绪反应，上述对于收藏的欲望是永不平息的。从表演理论的语境去看，作家和策展人克里斯托弗·贝德福德称这种现象为“表演的病毒本体”，并将之延伸到追溯历史（从理论上可以延伸到无穷大）以及在多个不同媒体将表演重新动画化。

记录同样按照这种理性。在没有活动的情况下，一个富有多层复杂结构的记录证明了作品的存在。诚如对罗兰·巴尔泰斯而言，一部电影的精华都保存在电影的剧照里。对于艺术理论家斯文·卢提根而言，一场真正的现场表演的精华可能是保留在照片、影片、录像和描述。虽然这些电影和表演的精华是否存在无从确定，对于它们剩余历史的关注倒是可以帮助我们理解它们源头作品的本质。在这里，《溶解胶片选集》作为《禅之电影》的变体，可以被视作它在1960年代的放映的剩余物和记录，为转移到麦西纳斯手上时候的物料状态留下证据。

就像一个相互依存的家庭族谱，有了最初的文件然后再出现文件的副本，在这个过程中文件副本也成了艺术作品。这种文件地层学可能永不停止扩张，一直在现有积累的基础上不断发展出新的层次。新的解读、科技、实现的文化（允许一些事物的出现但阻止了其他事物的出现）以及作品同时在多个地点出现和被解读，这一切都使得要建立一个完整的作品档案成为空谈。之后产生的解读只能依靠碎片化的资讯，而且永远做不到不偏不倚和完整。

从时间的角度来看，《禅之电影》可以被视为一场表演，而投影机则提供了动作演出给观众欣赏。机械的体现包含了一件装置在播放一部空白的影片，从而产生一个投影出来的垂直平面。这个表演保留的是影片循环播放留下的痕迹，一个时间的标记，对于许多个小时劳动留下的参照以及个别物件给观众作为欣赏。

视乎投影播放的状态，以及对于什么可以获得许可进入档案的判断价值观，这场表演的剩余物——使用过的胶片——是可以“被保留”以及可能被保留。他们可能就像之前的胶片和放在盒子里的激浪派包版本一样，成为了代表时间流逝的象征，被当做是化石般的电影手工艺品一样去珍惜，但也同样因为这个原因而永远无法再见天日。

按照维护的永恒逻辑，我们可以保留《禅之电影》现在放映的剩余物吗？太多的剩余物可能会贬低了遗留胶片的价值，后者的价值不但因为它是放映历史上独一无二的元素，也因为它作为商品的价值是无可复制以及是独一无二的可收藏品。在多次与策展人对话的过程中，曾有人建议应该强制作品借用人销毁在重新安装作品时使用过的电影幻灯片，我对这个建议感到惊奇。如果真的按照这个建议，难道不是让现代艺术博物馆对手上持有的遗留胶片拥有特殊的占有权？

很明显，这样的做法将使《禅之电影》失去其概念潜在的无限延伸能力。根据迪克·希金斯有关于艺术作品本质的例子理论，透过实现一个概念（也可以是源自一个符号或者是一个模型）产生的物件仅仅只是例子，而不是最后的成品。这些尝试抑制《禅之电影》开放性的做法（不但针对作品最初的概念，也对激进派开源大量制造的版本）可以理解为对艺术作品符号经济的干预。这种做法倾向于支持商品化产品的消费，但剥夺了《禅之电影》开放、活跃的社会过程以及它的不稳定性。

### 更多艺术作品的相对论的后果

“喜爱物件，尊重物件”，这是美国艺术家克拉斯·奥尔登堡曾作出的呼吁，指的是在表演结束后被选中的物件。他的观点是：“剩余物件是在表演和重复表演的过程中产生的。表演是主角，但当它结束以后，会产生一些附属的物件，它们可能是单独的、纪念品或是剩余物。”这些剩余物承载的回忆和历史有可能在现在重现。最重要的是它们可以按照传统（西方）博物馆的标准去稳固和保留物件。除此之外，如果艺术作品本身的功能不是作为可收藏的物件但却成为了藏品，《禅之电影》的遗留胶片就是例子之一，由市场经济主导的商品化过程强化了维护和“维护者”的做法。博物馆化的过程对消失做出了反击。透过收藏物件的癖好去治疗伤痛和怀旧的欲望可以说是根深蒂固。

现在，循着艺术作品的时间相对论去考虑可能会出现很有意思的结果。如果我们颠倒对艺术作品是一个物件的假设，我们大可以提出到底是否所有的艺术作品其实都是时间实体，它们都是较长或较短的活动、表演或过程。利用同样的逻辑，传统的油画或雕塑则被视为较长时长的艺术作品。这也可能颠覆维护的传统思维，以及策展和博物馆方面的惯例。不但原来恒久和无常的二元论会变得无效，对于如何透过对旧有“稳定”物件的想法去掌握“新”的本质（多媒体、演出、活动）也产生了许多问题。

我提出的建议也可能产生另一个影响，我们可以通过“新的”镜头去看待传统的艺术作品。从对话的角度去看，它可能会被看作是一件需要不少关注的新颖事物，在这里并不可行。演出或是活动都有着被压缩的时间存在，但不代表它们缺少了物质。另外，一件艺术作品产出的物料数量可能会跟它的存在时间成反比。换言之，艺术作品越早消失，它可能会更有力，产出更多。在博物馆化和商品化的过程中，为了回应获得有形物件的冲动，那些残余物、道具、遗留物、影片和电影纪录反而有可能获得艺术品的身份。当然，这些物件可以“永久”保存，符合传统唯物主义者态度。

这不代表较长时长的艺术作品无法制造记录，事实恰恰相反。较长时长作品产出的记录无法与表演所积累的记录和剩余物件相提并论。较长时长物件可以产出许多，但它们从体裁的多样性和丰富度，到成为艺术作品的潜力都无法与较短时长的艺术作品相比较。

可是传统物件有什么是可以比拟表演产生的遗留物和剩余物呢？可能“稳定物件”本身就是自身的遗留物和残留物，积累自身的地层信息和过往遇到的介入（清洁和润饰等）。知名艺术家的作品可能会被视为纪念物，在廉价商店用5元购买的没有署名的油画可能只会被视为是一场不被欣赏的表演的剩余物。

### 活动之后，或是还剩下什么

对《禅之电影》作为一个表演进行概念化的方法让我想起哲学家大卫·戴维斯的美学理论。这个类型理论源自查尔斯·桑德斯·皮尔斯在语义学上对“类型”和“象征”的区别。一般而言，这个经过长期争辩的区别可以应用在多个艺术学科譬如音乐和摄影，可以将象征的特质归类为普遍类型（打印出来的照片，一首音乐作品的演出）。建基在格雷戈里·卡里对单一和多重艺术之间差异的一视同仁（古德曼的符号理论是这种差异的例子之一），戴维斯大胆地改变了他的理论并指出所有的艺术作品都是象征活动，而不是类型活动。有趣的是，与1960年代艺术界发生的一些事件不谋而合以及之前提到的理论基础，对于戴维斯来说真正的工作是过程，艺术家透过一系列的行动去完成他的作品，关键不是最后的成品。戴维斯曾指出画好的画布是一件让我们可以欣赏艺术家成就的“集中的欣赏”，并且代表了艺术家的意念和作品。这类集中决定了物件；有的需要分析设定。

我认为如果一件艺术作品的意念与艺术家所进行的创意行动是一样的话是非常有趣的。但是，如果反过来看，这个理论其实可以走的更远一点。如果大家仔细观察艺术作品创作的模式，换言之，它们怎么成型，对于识别艺术作品的状态也可以透过观察艺术作品的来生。一件艺术作品的来生是在作品“发生”以后的时间（霍伊巴赫的观点），重要的是去识别到底艺术作品是什么和如何完成。这个意识非常重要，因为这是我们唯一可以涉足的现实。所以我们不再尝试追溯过去，不再想象过去发生的事情，这里提出的理论是坚持观察现在：不光是创作的过程可以给我们提供关于艺术作品是什么的资讯（这一般都牵涉到猜测），其实重新演绎，扩大的追踪历史，实现和转折——衰退、分解和退化。我的提议可以算在类型理论的建议，但与卡里和戴维斯视艺术作品为表演的理论不同，我关注的是剩下的一切：物件、剩余物、道具、残留物和记录等。因此，虽然两个理论都关注创作艺术作品的过程，我的提议主要关注一种研究艺术作品的模式，而这个模式关注的不是艺术品是如何和何时创造，而是创作完之后剩下什么，剩下的东西现在成了什么。这是唯一指定的现实，也是对作品的切入点。因此，从产品——艺术（传统艺术作品）转移到过程——艺术（在1960年代时代转移和时代理论出现以后的艺术作品）暗示了现在关注的是剩下的。

## 时长与强度

接下来艺术作品也可以根据它们的时间特性得到识别：它们可能会按照各自的时

事实上，《禅之电影》带给我们丰富多样的时长。虽然如我之前强调的，这些类

《禅之电影》这类艺术作品的延续策略其实也反映了他们最早的构思。与历史

## 同时和异时作品

一起伪造就会想起古德曼对于可伪造 / 亲笔手写与不可伪造 / 代书异体艺术之间

《禅之电影》的遗留胶片拥有同时实体的特性，而《禅之电影》的投影则拥有异

## 维护作为短暂介入

总而言之，在后凯奇时代艺术作品如《禅之电影》所发生的改变不但反映了艺术

与其不断尝试阻止改变，将自身放在执行不可能的任务中，我们可以对所有种类

同样的，策展和维护可以被视为对这些艺术作品的短暂介入。与其赋予它们再生

视乎维护的文化，应该由档案去制定规则和就什么可以说或做设定限制，同时参

与其指出表演理论对于这项研究过于激进，我认为它其实提供了机会从时长的

在这里呈现对策展和维护的想法都是希望大家能够接受这些媒介的改变和无常为



# The Aesthetics of Change in Paik's Zen for Film

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"What is *Zen for Film*?" I was asked sometime in the early fall of 2014, on the occasion of a preparatory meeting for *Revisions*, an exhibition to feature *Zen for Film* (1962–64), Nam June Paik's "blank" film projection. Despite the many discussions that preceded the meeting, when it came to the question of what the main—and the only—artwork of this exhibition was, we felt as if we'd been left in the dark.

Curatorial engagements are not always simple. Only sometimes might they involve the pleasing task of assembling exhibitions from objects that tell fascinating stories. But the act of exhibiting may also fill the space with the vastness of a philosophical challenge, as in the case of *Zen for Film*. The gesture of exposing an artwork to the gaze of the viewer can pose arduous questions—questions with which one struggles without any hope of enlightenment and to which answers are always partial and imperfect. What, then, is *Zen for Film*? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to someone else, to paraphrase Saint Augustine, I do not know.

Is *Zen for Film* an object to be respected as an artifact and for its material idiosyncrasies—an object/"multiple" or an object/relic? Is it an idea, a concept—or rather, an event, a performance, or a process? How has what it is been determined by what it once was—or what it has become in the process of reinterpretation? How has it been affected by conceptual and physical change? All in all, what, how, and when is the artwork?

*Revisions—Zen for Film*, a book published by Bard Graduate Center, New York and University of Chicago Press in September 2015 is an exploration of all of these questions. *Zen for Film*, also known as *Fluxfilm NO. 1*, is one of the most evocative works by Korean-American artists Nam June Paik. Created during the early 1960s, this piece consists of a screening of blank film; as the film ages and wears in the projector, the viewer is confronted with a constantly evolving work. Because of this mutability, the project, as I show, undermines any assumption that art can be subject to a single interpretation.

Featuring *Zen for Film* as its main character, this book sets out to challenge a number of assumptions about *Zen for Film* from the perspective of its presentation, archivization, and continuation. From such a multifocal stance, and with potential consequences for analogous artworks, *Revisions* addresses what is at stake when it comes to the artwork's presentation—an act shaping not only the (relatively) momentary event of exhibiting objects but also the way in which artworks may be perceived, remembered, and reactivated in the future. Inquiring into the modes of an artwork's existence, *Revisions* observes how technological obsolescence and reinterpretation frame the work's identity. Particularly with respect to recurring installations that undergo the process of de- and re-assembly, such as *Zen for Film*, questions regarding its institutionalization, display, and distribution become the ones that affect its existence. In the case of iterant artworks, care for the future,

a mission long assigned to conservation, is clearly inseparable from the question of curation; reciprocally, curation cannot avoid challenges posed by questions concerning conservation. Conservation, then, like its "object," becomes something else—it considers the continuity of artworks on both a conceptual and a material level rather than fostering attachment exclusively to the material object.

In what follows, I offer a few paragraphs from *Revisions—Zen for Film* that accompanied an eponymously titled exhibition organized at the Bard Graduate Center Gallery in New York (September 17, 2015—February 22, 2016). Fragments of this essay were also published in my article "The Aesthetics of Change" and on the website of the project Media in the Expanded Field.<sup>1</sup>

...

*You say: the real, the world as it is. But it is not, it becomes! It moves, it changes! It doesn't wait for us to change... It is more mobile than you can imagine. You are getting closer to this reality when you say it 'presents itself'; that means that it is not there, existing as an object. The world, the real is not an object. It is a process* (Cage 1981: 80).

With these words, John Cage, one of the most influential avant-garde composers, music theorists, writers and artists of the 20th century, reminds us of the change that the psychophysical world undergoes. This change opposes the fixity and self-containment of objects and artworks<sup>2</sup>—an issue too often neglected, especially when we analyse the expanded field of conservation, including presentation and curatorial practices. Too often, these practices assume a certain fixity of objects or even strive to accomplish it.

In this paper, I propose to revisit some implicit and explicit concepts in art and conservation theories that contributed to a notion of a static object with a particular emphasis on the materiality of Nam June Paik's filmic work *Zen for Film* (1962–64), also known as *Fluxfilm No. 1*. Fluxus is a particularly fruitful terrain for my query essentially due to its precursory role in the development of performance art, its questioning of the status of the object and its focus on the idea of temporality and duration.

## From traditional to new conceptions

For some considerable time, both art and conservation theories were oriented towards a static, stable, unique and authentic object. In conservation discourse and practice, such an understanding of an object was bound with traditional approaches established in the context of the restoration of artworks conceived of as unique things, often in a single medium, embodying an (individual) authorial intention. Because the goal of traditional conservation was to render 'objects' stable, change was charged with negative qualities, so it was often to be concealed and/or arrested. This also had an

impact on the notion of time implicit in thinking about the conservation of artworks. Associated with a negative aspect of change, time was smoking the picture (William Hogarth), often related to the negative effects of yellowing, cracking and fading of painted layers. Paradoxes of the ideas about time and their relation to the status of objects resulted in attempts to return the previous, 'intended' condition of an object following – and at the same time subverting – the linear conception of time (Hölling 2013: 157). With the introduction of changeable artworks sometime from the middle of the last century, conservation theories gradually began to shift. New thinking in this field began to be marked by the dichotomy of the enduring and the ephemeral—two different conditions of art to be conceptualised and treated differently.

Until the transformation in the understanding of artworks created since the late 1950s brought about different conceptions of what art might be, art theoretical discourse, too, revolved around the questionable term of a static art object (Merewether and Potts 2010: 5; Heubach 1970). Since the late 1950s, artworks have gradually become associated with action, performance, happening and event. "Art is an artwork not as long as it endures, but when it happens", claimed German art theorist and psychologist Friedrich Wolfram Heubach (1970).<sup>3</sup> The idea of duration and temporality ruptured art-historical narratives and effectuated a certain detour in the understanding of the art object, formulated in the criticism of that time, notably in relation to painting. American critic Harold Rosenberg sought to understand a painting in terms of the transformation of its artefactual 'thingness' to the act of painting itself (Rosenberg 1952). The event of the painting resulted in the physical evidence of a completed set of actions. In his writings, following Rosenberg and with reference to Jackson Pollock, Allan Kaprow approached Pollock's paintings in terms of concluded happenings (Kaprow 2003 [1958]). A painting was 'happening' now (shifting its status from gerund to a verb) (McLure 2007: 14), and an artwork 'worked'. As one of the most versatile artistic tendencies of the 1960s, Fluxus, too, radically questioned the status of the 'art object' as both a representation and as a static entity. Art, since Fluxus, has become a do-it-yourself – but rather than a do-it-yourself object, a do-it-yourself reality. The functional, sacrosanct object, an art object as a commodity and as a vehicle of its own history, was rejected by artists associated with Fluxus (which did not prevent it from returning in the later phase of the commodification of performances).<sup>4</sup> Instead, and as we shall see in the example of *Zen for Film*, art became that which happens and transitions—an artwork in the state of permanent impermanence.

### The artwork(s)

In one of its many incarnations, *Zen for Film* is a filmic artwork created by Paik sometime between 1962 and 1964 (Fig.1). In its simplicity, Paik's creative act assumed a Duchampian gesture of a readymade: what the work constituted was a blank 16 mm film leader run through a projector. Although functioning as a concept rather than a physical arrangement of things, the work, as originally conceived, was bound to a specific display apparatus, a film projector. The projector determined the behavior of

the work and resulted in a visual performance in which change – the accumulated dust, scratches and marks – played a considerable role. *Zen for Film* leans on the aesthetics of bricolage: Paik's creative gesture rendered a conventionally used film leader, a material widely available, and an ubiquitously present analogue film projector, his filmic opus magnum. The more used the better – the film, worn, used and stressed, was to represent the material condition of its own existence, as well as Paik's thinking with and through the medium of film in the vein of experimental and structural cinema.

*Zen for Film* must have fascinated George Maciunas (1931 – 1978), a self-proclaimed Fluxus impresario and organizational force as well as an enthusiast of film culture. Producing unlimited homemade Fluxus editions, Fluxkits, Maciunas encased various lengths of a blank film leader in several plastic boxes acquired in Canal Street in New York.<sup>5</sup> Through this gesture, *Zen for Film* from Fluxkit emerged: it indeed retained Paik's initial concept (a potentially projectable film), but it also became something else—a collectable artifact (Fig. 2). Additionally, Maciunas also transposed *Zen for Film*'s simple logic—a leader that runs through a projector with no determination of duration—into a determined duration of a Fluxfilm program. One of them, *Fluxfilm Anthology* (1962 – 1970),<sup>6</sup> comprises some 37 Fluxfilms by artists including George Brecht, Dick Higgins, Yoko Ono and Wolf Vostell. *Zen for Film* opens the compilation with a title sequence: "Zen for Film Fluxfilm No.1. Nam June Paik." In this film, the processual character of the artwork, its trace accumulation and the undetermined duration of projection became fixed (which did not prevent the new medium from being worn and stressed in its own manner).

The transposition of *Zen for Film* to its Fluxkit variant and to Film Anthology effectuated from Maciunas' ideology of economic distribution of Fluxus artworks reassured by his leftist political attitude. Art making, according to Maciunas, should be available to everybody and should use the simplest means available. From another perspective, Paik, too, was interested in simplicity derived from Zen Buddhism and its assignment of minimal importance to the execution of artworks as well as an emphasis on the nature of materials (an artwork is already a work of natural art before the arrival of the artist on the scene). The identity of the early *Zen for Film* might be located in its transition from Paik's initial idea (a blank film run on a projector) to Maciunas' later interpretations (*Zen for Film* as a Fluxkit and as a part of Fluxfilm Anthology) which not only destabilizes the concept of a static object, but also questions the notion of singular authorship. Later transitions of *Zen for Film*, however, have to be entirely attributed to the artwork's museological life.

### The troubling multiplicity

*Zen for Film* has entered numerous collections such as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, Harvard Art Museums/the Fogg Art Museum in Cambridge and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, among

many others. Increasingly, the artwork has been displayed as a 16 mm projection, as a 8 mm projection (most certainly a result of erroneous interpretation of the film leader's dimension), as a film from Fluxkit, as a film relic from the 1960s enclosed in a film can and housed by the MoMA Silverman Fluxus Collection (Fig. 3), and as a digital file.<sup>7</sup> The work can also be viewed and is known to the majority of the Internet users in its digital form on YouTube, UbuWeb and until recently, it was also available through the Electronic Arts InterMix (EAI) digital database.

In the course of my research, *Zen for Film* materialized in many variants and variations. For instance, the Guggenheim Museum in New York presented *Zen for Film* as a projection together with the 1960s filmic relic (*The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989*, 30 January – 19 April 2009), while Tate Liverpool displayed a digital file extracted from *Fluxfilm Anthology (Nam June Paik: Video Artist, Performance Artist, Composer and Visionary*, 17 December 2010 – 13 March 2011). MoMA displayed *Zen for Film* as a looped 16 mm film projection<sup>8</sup> (*There Will Never Be Silence: Scoring John Cage's 3'44"*, 12 October 2013 – 22 June 2014) and has only recently discouraged to present the filmic relic vis-à-vis the projection. Often the viewer encounters in the gallery only the Fluxkit version of the work, which represents the idea of a collectable but lacks the cinematic representation of Paik's idea.

There is, it seems, no limitation to the multiplicity of existence of Paik's filmic work. This is also the reason why, when it comes to the moment of its exhibition, the standard art-historical line of inquiry might not be sufficient to account for what is at stake. Although obtaining permissions (either from Paik's Estate and/or from one of the museums) seems to be a sufficient condition to project the work, how about *Zen for Film*'s many physical variants, the relic of the 1960s and the filmic residues produced more recently? Are all these works, indeed, *Zen for Film*?

Is *Zen for Film* conservable? When the work is displayed as a projection, nothing changes hands between the borrower and the lender but the instruction (the borrower is responsible for an arrangement of both the projection and the film leader). Therefore, it could be said that there is indeed nothing to be preserved. But if we examine more closely the idea of retaining the filmic relic from the 1960s, its preservation might signal an attachment to the physical trace – to the conservation of the tangible, stable object. Having a different history, *Zen for Film* from Fluxkits also seems to satisfy conservation's materialist ideology in that these films are never projected, but are kept encased in a plastic box.

*Zen for Film* is neither exhibitable nor conservable without asking more profound questions concerning its nature and behavior. Is *Zen for Film* an object to be respected for its artifactual nature and material idiosyncrasies—an object-multiple or an object-relic? Is it an idea, a concept, or, rather, a cinematic event, a performance of the blank film (where the role of the body known from traditional performance is

taken over by the apparatus), or a process of trace accumulation and degradation? How has what it is been determined by what it once was, or what it has become in the process of reinterpretation, affected by conceptual and physical change? All in all, what, how and when is the artwork?

Although to attempt to give answers to each of these questions in this paper would necessarily fail due to the spatial constraints, and *Revisions—Zen for Film* (Hölling 2015) elaborates on them more extensively,<sup>9</sup> in the following, I argue that *Zen for Film*'s changeable character reflects the temporal turn of the 1960s and performance-oriented interests. I also propose that the dilemma posed by the multiplicity of *Zen for Film*'s potential presentations reflects the dialectic of permanence and impermanence, explicated in the attachment to the physical, collectable object and in the zeal to preserve static things.

#### The dichotomy of the permanent and the impermanent

Thinking about artworks can never be divorced from the temporal aspects of materiality. In this context, I cannot help but wonder what it means that something, an artwork, is impermanent. The ideal of permanence of things and interests in securing the existence of artworks in the future bound with the notion of timelessness is an underlying principle of conservation. But what is the reason for this? Why do objects have to be rendered permanent? Where does the division between the permanent and impermanent come from, and how can we conceive of artworks in relation to this dichotomy?

I hypothesize that this dichotomy is evoked by the problem of the understanding of artworks as being in time, in duration, and has something to do with the understanding of time in terms of endurance as cut to the human dimension. Likewise, this problem might also relate to the fact that in conservation and museum practice, the life of a conservator or a curator is too short to grasp the temporal passing of a masterpiece, which is therefore conceived – and has to be conserved – to endure forever, or at least for an 'ever' of a human temporal dimension. This is precisely, I would argue, what elicits the idea of a stable, 'conservable' object and what determines traditional theories of conservation.

The consideration of the temporal aspect of artworks evokes Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's division between spatial and temporal art and its critique in media and art theories (Lessing 1853). As I argued in *Re:Paik* (Hölling 2013: 188-190), spatial art has similar qualities to temporal art, and might be viewed as slow rather than fast. Such a temporal definition of a medium allows us to identify its active and passive response to time, and differentiation in the ways media undergo change. Artworks such as media installations, performance and events actively involved with time experience faster change; slower artworks such as painting and sculpture passively respond to time, which becomes reflected in the degradation, decay and ageing of their physical

materials. In its cinematic manifestation, *Zen for Film*'s constant readiness to shed its physical freight renders it an artwork actively responding to time. On the artefactual level, the Fluxkits and relic, in turn, accept the temporal passing, clearly visible in the embrittlement of the celluloid, yellowing of the labels and plastic casings.

With this and the example of *Zen for Film* in mind, rather than thinking about the permanent versus the impermanent, I suggest reconsidering artworks from the point of view of the relativity of their temporal duration.

#### The relative durations of the impermanent

'The issue is not one of the ephemeral versus the permanent. Nothing is forever. It is the question of the relative durations of the impermanent', stated British performance artist Stuart Brisley (2008: 83). Accordingly, perhaps instead of the problematic dichotomy of the permanent and impermanent, one could focus attention on the aesthetics and qualities of change, accepting change as a positive value with regard to both short-durational and long-durational works.

In order to elucidate my point, I will argue that because *Zen for Film* can be re-instantiated every time anew with the help of a different film projector and a leader, it approximates the cyclical, occurrent and repetitive logic of performance and event. Artworks-events, performances and processes often require textual stabilisation: scores, instructions, scripts, testimonies and digital narratives. Although there is no evidence that Paik ever formulated an instruction on how to project the film, *Zen for Film*'s instruction exists both implicitly (it is passed over by Paik's Estate, his curators and collaborators) and explicitly in the form of a document, such as, for instance Loan Specifications formulated by MoMA.<sup>10</sup>

Artworks-events, performances and processes also generate a vast number of objects and by-products that act against its temporal passing – the 'death drive' as it were. Documentation (film, video, photography, text), props, costumes and leftovers, requisites and relics all fill in for the absence of the event, ensuring a relation to the sphere of the tangible, legible and visible. Here, the aesthetics of change might be replaced by the aesthetics of disappearance, understood as generative of the amassment of materials produced while the work 'disappears'. This deficiency generates the urge to preserve and collect which, in turn, expands the artworks' all-accumulating archive. As in Freud's theory of fetish that also relates to the affect oriented towards physical objects, this desire to collect is never stilled. In the context of performance theory, the writer and curator Christopher Bedford names this phenomenon 'the viral ontology of performance', and relates it to extended trace history (theoretically extendable to infinity) and reanimation of performance in a variety of media (Bedford 2012).

Documentation, too, partakes in this rationality. In the absence of the event, a complex structure of multilayered documentation proves the existence of the work. Just as for

Barthes the essence of film resides in film stills (Barthes 1970),<sup>11</sup> for art theorist Sven Lütticken, the essence of true live performance might be seen in photos, films, video and descriptions (Lütticken 2005: 24). Whether or not the existence of such essence in film and performance can be claimed, focused attention paid to their extended residual history is highly relevant for the understanding of the nature of their sources. Here, the *Fluxfilm Anthology* variant of *Zen for Film* might be seen as both a residue and a documentation of the projection of the 1960s bearing evidence of its material condition at the moment it was transposed by Maciunas.<sup>12</sup>

In a sort of genealogical interdependence, in which facsimiles of documents build upon documents and which, in turn, build upon documents that become artworks themselves,<sup>13</sup> such stratigraphy of documentation may never cease to expand, continually depositing new layers on the already accumulated sediment. New interpretations, technologies, cultures of actualisation (permitting certain things while restricting others), and multiple locations in which the work exists or is reinterpreted render the achievement of the totality of an artwork's archive an illusion. The subsequent interpretation will therefore only rely on fragmented information and will be never unbiased, complete.

From the temporal perspective, then, *Zen for Film* might be conceived of as a performance of sorts, in which the action is enacted by the projector and witnessed by the audience. The mechanical embodiment consists of an apparatus that runs a blank film and results in a projected-upon vertical surface. What remains of this performance is film loops endowed with trace, a temporal marker and reference to the many hours of labour, individual objects to be appreciated for their evidential quality. Dependent on the status of the projection, and contingent on value judgements regarding what might receive permission to enter the archive (whether it is deemed valuable, historical or worthless), the residues of this performance – the used films – are 'conservable' and might be preserved. Potentially, they may, just like the early film and the boxed Fluxkit editions, become a signifier of times long passed—fossilised filmic artefact-relics cherished for their link to the past, but also precisely for this reason condemned never again to see the light of the projector.

Following the perpetual logic of preservation, can we keep the residues of *Zen for Film*'s current projections? Too many leftovers may possibly relativise the value of the relic that rests not only in its singularity as an element of the historical projection, but also in the commodity value that it acquires as a non-replicable, unique and fetishised collectable. During numerous conversations with curators, a suggestion to oblige borrowers to destroy used filmstrips produced in the course of the works' reinstallations surprised me. If such suggestions have to be followed, would it not allow MoMA to claim a certain exclusivity of its relic?

Clearly, such practice would disable the potential limitlessness of *Zen for Film*'s existence implied in its concept. Rather than being final products, according to Dick

Higgins' theory of an exemplarist nature of artwork (Higgins 1978: 156), the objects resulting from the realisation of such a concept (but also from a notation or a model) are only examples.<sup>14</sup> The practice of imposing limitations on *Zen for Film's* open character (which not only pertains to the openness of the initial concept but is also specific to Fluxus' open-ended, mass-produced editions) might be understood as an intervention in the symbolic economy of artworks. This practice leans towards a consumption of commodified products and is deprived of the open, active and social process involved in contingencies and instabilities of *Zen for Film*.<sup>15</sup>

#### More consequences of artworks' temporal relativity

'Love objects, respect objects', pleads American artist Claes Oldenburg referencing the creative act of selection and care for what is picked up after the performance (Oldenburg 1995 [1962]). He continues: 'Residual objects are created in the course of making the performance and during repeated performances. The performance is the main thing, but when it's over there are a number of subordinate pieces, which might be isolated, souvenirs, or residual objects.' These residual previously 'acted' or 'domesticated' objects bear memory and a history that might unfold in the present (Brignone 2009: 67). They also, most importantly, fulfill the desire to stabilise and preserve objects in accordance with traditional (Western) museological standards. Moreover, if works were not meant to function as collectable objects, but became such – *Zen for Film's* filmic relic being an example – the processes of commodification dictated by market economies reinforce conservation and 'conservationist' gestures. The process of musealisation counters disappearance. The wish to cure grief and nostalgia with the fetish of an object is, indeed, deeply rooted.

Now, the implications of thinking along the lines of artworks' temporal relativity may have fascinating consequences. If one inverts the standard assumption of an artwork as an object, a question might be posed as to whether or not all artworks might be conceived of as temporal entities, either long or short events, performances or processes. Accordingly, traditional paintings or sculptures would become long-durational artworks. This may also invert conventional thinking in conservation and curatorial and museum practice. Not only could the dichotomy of 'the ephemeral' versus 'the permanent' be revoked, but also the problem of grappling with the nature of the 'new' (multimedia, performance, event) through the lens of deeply rooted ideas about the old, 'stable' object.

Perhaps also, as one more consequence of my proposition, traditional artworks could be approached through the lens of the 'new'. Seen from the conservation perspective, it seems to be a novelty that requires some attention, not persuasible here. Performances or events have a compressed temporal presence, but are no less material. Moreover, the number of materials produced by the artwork might be seen as inversely proportional to its endurance in time. In other words, the 'sooner' the artwork disappears, and perhaps the more intensive it is, the more it produces. In the process of musealisation

and commodification, and in response to the urge to secure tangible things, leftovers, props, relics, video and film documentation may even acquire the status of artworks themselves.<sup>16</sup> These things, of course, might be kept 'forever', satisfying the traditional materialist attitude.

That is not to say that long-durational artworks fail to produce documentation – quite the contrary. Notwithstanding, as seen in proportion to their duration, the documentation in long-durational works seems to be incomparable with the amassment of documentation and residual objects produced by performance. There is a lot in long-durational objects, but they are never as varied and rich in genre and quantity and in potential to become artworks as in the case of short-durational works.

But what could be analogue to the performance's relics and leftovers in the case of traditional objects? Perhaps, in a sense, the 'stable object' is its own relic and remnant, accumulating stratigraphic strata of its own making and all past interventions (cleaning, retouching, etc.). While works by acclaimed artists would hold the position of the relic, the unsigned painting bought at the Housing Works Thrift Shop for 5 dollars might be conceived of as a leftover of an unappreciated performance.

#### After the event, or what remains

The way of conceptualisation of *Zen for Film* as performance recalls the aesthetic theories of philosopher David Davies (2004). The type-theory stems from C.S. Peirce's semantic distinctions between the senses of the words 'type' and 'token' (Peirce 1906). Generally speaking, this much-debated distinction applies to the multiple arts such as music and photography, and characterises tokens as instantiating the universal type (prints of a photograph, performances of a musical work). Building on Gregory Currie's suspension of the distinction between the singular and multiple arts (Goodman's theory of symbols being an example of this distinction),<sup>17</sup> Davies offers a twist on his theory by claiming that all artworks are token-events rather than type-events (Rohrbaugh 2005 [2002]). Interestingly, coinciding with the temporal turn in the arts of the 1960s and its theoretical underpinnings discussed earlier, for Davies, the real work is the process, a series of actions by which the artist arrives at his product and not the product itself. According to Davies, the painted canvas is a 'focus of appreciation' through which we appreciate the artist's achievement and which embodies the artist's idea and work. Kinds of foci determine physical objects; some require analysing the enactment (Davies 2004).

I believe that the idea of an artwork identified by the sort of creative action undertaken by an artist is very interesting. However, if approached from a reversed perspective, this theory might indeed be taken further. If careful attention is paid to the modes of artworks' creation – in other words, how they came into being – the conditions for identifications of artworks might equally be provided by the observation of the afterlives of artworks. An artwork's afterlife concerns the time after the work 'happened'

(in Heubach's sense), important to identify what and how the artwork is. This realisation is highly important because it is the only reality to which we have access. So instead of retroactively identifying, not to say imagining, the past, the proposed theory insists on looking at the present: it is not exclusively the process of creation that provides information on what these works are (which always involves guesswork), but the re-enactment, expanded trace history, actualisation and also transition – decay, disintegration and degradation. My proposition falls within the type-theoretic proposal, but unlike Currie and Davies' theory of works as performances, it focuses instead on what is left: the object, leftovers, props, residues, documentation, etc.<sup>18</sup> Thus, although both theories concern the question of when the artwork is, my proposal focuses on a mode of studying artworks that shifts from how and when art was created, to what is left from the creative act, what became of it in the present – the only reality given and point of access to the work. Consequently, the shift from product-art (traditional artworks) to process-art (artworks after the temporal turn in the sense of both the 1960s temporal shift and the temporal theories proposed) implies the concerns with that which remains.<sup>19</sup>

#### Duration and intensity

Further it follows that artworks might be identified in relation to their temporal characteristics: they might all be understood as durational, yet distinct. Events endure differently from performances, whereby the defining parameters here are duration and intensity.<sup>20</sup> Albeit subject to relativity judgment, the duration and intensity distinguishes the event from performance, from process, from object, and overcomes the dichotomy of two categories of artworks – the permanent and the impermanent.

In fact, *Zen for Film* presents us with an entire variety of temporal durations. Although, as I stressed, the distinctions between these categories are relative: if Paik's film is conceptualised within a particular context, it might be grasped as an event (in the sense of a non-repeatable, cinematic event), performance (in the sense of the performed spectacle and dependent on the length of viewer's engagement), process (in the sense of accumulating traces throughout the totality of the time in which it is projected) and object (in the sense of apparatus, filmic props, Fluxfilms and filmic remnant-relic).

The strategies of continuation of artworks such as *Zen for Film* reflect the way in which they are conceived. Against the historical ban on reproduction (Phelan 1993: 3), performance might be re-enacted and process redone. Despite the singularity and irreducibility of the qualities of experience of an event, there is a recognition that the event will be repeated, too, albeit differently (Heathfield 2013: 31). The system of recurring iterations always involves deferral and difference.<sup>21</sup> However, the 'technique of repetition' does not apply to artworks as physical objects. Not compliant with the ruling museological and conservation culture, such re-doing of an object will always be classified as a copy, or, in more derogatory terms, a forgery, depending on

valency, rules and legislation. And yet, in an ongoing aporia of existential diversity, do performance, event and process not result in 'objects-originals'? (See *Zen for Film's* relic.)

#### Autochronic and allochronic works

Forgery recalls the Goodman distinctions between forgeable/autographic and unforgeable/allographic arts (Goodman 1976). Generally, it could be assumed that allographic arts are characterized by short duration and autographic works by long duration. Here, in order to stress the temporal dimension of my argument and draw attention to another of its aspects, I would like to replace allographic and autographic with the neologisms of allochronicity and autochronicity, respectively. I owe this terminology to the theorist and composer Michael Century,<sup>22</sup> who employs it in relation to the specificity of scores.<sup>23</sup> Re-proposing Century's terms in the context of the temporal relativity of artworks, I propose that the allochronic might refer to artworks untethered to a specific temporality and re-performable, while the autochronic might designate artworks that have a specific, fixed relation to time. Autochronic artworks are something hitherto designated as long-durational, quasi "stable objects," while allochronic artworks may reoccur in instances of their repeated iterations.

*Zen for Film's* relic would thus assume the character of an autochronic entity, while *Zen for Film* projection, an allochronic one. Again, this distinction is only viable in the context of the Western traditional museological (and conservation culture), in which the replication of the long-durational artwork is not accepted as a valid strategy of its continuation. Staying close in its relationship to the token-theory by denying the divide between the multiple and singular artworks, autochronicity and allochronicity assure both the artwork's location in a temporal structure and its temporal identity.

#### Conservation as temporal intervention

In sum, the transformation in artworks created in the post-Cagean era such as *Zen for Film* reflects not only a general change in the concept of art, what art can be (a question of ontological nature) – and I have only scratched the surface of this puzzle – but also elicits a shift in thinking on their presentation and continuity. If we consider the order of things in conservation and curation seriously, apart from its theoretical implications, the suspension of the dichotomy of traditional 'enduring' objects versus 'ephemeral' short-durational objects would release us from the urge to dissolve the conflicting poles in everyday practice. Instead of arresting change, and situating conservation as an active actor in this impossible mission, we may think of artworks of all kinds as ever-changing and evolving entities that continually undergo physical alteration and transition.

Accordingly, curation and conservation might be considered a temporal intervention in these artworks. Rather than assigning it regenerative capabilities (sometimes

wondrously allowing the artwork to return to its 'original state'), conservation would instigate just another change to the work in its long- or short-duration existence, compliant with archival and cultural permissions and/or limitations. Dependent on the cultures of conservation, it is the archive that establishes the rules and sets limits on what can be said or made, both with reference to the present, as well as to the past (Hölling 2013: 217-65; Hölling 2015: 73-90).

Rather than suggesting that performance theories are the non plus ultra to continue this inquiry, they may, I believe, offer an opportunity to rethink traditional objects in terms of duration. This, in turn, might expose the hidden deficiencies of theories long applied, and once and for all allow us to let go of the belief in the apparent stability of objects that for too long offered a skewed message by isolating the negative qualities of change.

The kind of thinking in the expanded field of curation and conservation presented here fosters the acknowledgment of changeability and impermanence of these media as a condition of possibility for their survival. As Jack Gladney in Don DeLillo's *White Noise*, once said: 'I've got death inside me. It's just a question of whether or not I can outlive it' (DeLillo 2009 [1985], 150).

#### Notes:

1. This essay originated as a paper presented during the symposium *Authenticity in Transition* at the Glasgow School of Art/University of Glasgow (1 – 2 December 2014) and on the occasion of 2015 College Art Association Annual Meeting in New York (11 February 2015, session *Preserving the Artistic Legacies of the 1960s and 1970s*). A web version can be accessed at <https://mefsite.wordpress.com/2016/06/07/revisions-of-the-aesthetics-of-change/>.
2. Whereas Cage might have also had in mind the impossibility of the object to represent or embody the real (as the real is in continual becoming), my treatment of his statement relates to the problem posed by the conception of a static object – a persistent notion in art-theoretical and conservation discourse.
3. "Kunst ist ein Kunstwerk nicht so lange, wie es hält, sondern passiert" (my translation).
4. In turn, assigned by the American critic Michael Fried with a certain form of performativity, the object-art of minimalism becomes theatrical (Fried 1998 [1967]).
5. The number of Fluxkirs produced by Maciunas probably exceeded 20.
6. Distributed by Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York.
7. With these variants the possibility of existence of *Zen for Film* is not yet exhausted. An 8 mm projection complicates its early history as a 16 mm film projection. Further, the questions of the documentary status of *Zen for Film* as a digital file (a part of *Fluxfilm Anthology*) raise an interesting debate as to the relation of the artwork to its documentation and the thin line that often separates them.
8. Early on, *Zen for Film* was a linear projection.
9. In *Revisions--Zen for Film*, I have pursued an extended analysis of *Zen for Film*'s multiple trajectories linked with the process of its distribution and musicalisation.
10. Encountered by the author on the occasion of the preparations for the exhibition *Revisions--Zen for Film*.
11. *Zen for Film* would, in this case, pose an exception. Its leader presents us with no images, no filmic photographs that might bear Barthes' essence of the filmic medium.
12. A remark on EAI's website ([www.eai.org/webPage.html?id=41](http://www.eai.org/webPage.html?id=41)) speaks to the identity of *Zen for Film* from *Fluxfilm Anthology* as, in fact, a document.
13. Mike Kelly's *The Parasite Lilly* (1980) displayed on the occasion of *The Rituals of the Rented Island* (Whitney Museum of American Art, 31 October 2013 – 2 February 2014) might serve here as an example. Rehearsal documentation, film, photographs, facsimiles, slides on different stages of emulation and digital reproduction were only some elements of its complex stratigraphy of documentation.
14. Higgins established his theory of the exemplarist nature of work in his writing entitled 'An exemplarist manifesto' (Higgins 1978, 156).
15. My argument approximates a similar debate in musicology concerning the grasp of musical work in terms of performance rather than a product-commodity (see Cook 2001). For contingencies and instabilities of the event and their relation to performance as a primary postmodern mode, see Kaye 1994.
16. Beuys, who practised 'religious conservation of his artworks' (Eric Mignon) or Paul Thek, who desperately sought support to keep the residues of his processual installations being an example. For a discussion of iconisation of Beuys' performance artefacts, see Mignon 2009.
17. Goodman 1976.
18. For an intriguing thought considering art as documentation, see Groys 2008.
19. There is one more aspect worthy of our close attention. As no artwork exists outside the context of that which remains of it, the medium (in both its material and immaterial format) might become identifiable by the change it experiences. It is the transition, deterioration, remediation, emulation and re-enactment that offer the point of access to the understanding of the nature of changeable works.
20. In this context, thinking about time in terms of intensity rather than in terms of the spatialised, mechanised way of time measurement appears more adequate.
21. According to Deleuze, if there was no difference in repetition, things would be identical: repetition is opposed to the fixity and identity of representation (Deleuze 1994 [1968]).
22. Michael Century (Professor of New Media and Music, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy), in discussion with the author, October 2013.
23. Century speaks about the open, improvisational and allochronic character of the score on a continuum as opposed to the closed, routine, autochronic score (Century 2014).

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#### IMAGE CAPTIONS (to be placed in close proximity of the respective images)

1. Nam June Paik, *Zen For Film*, 1962 – 64. Film projection. Installation view during the exhibition *Revisions-Zen for Film*, Bard Graduate Center's Focus Gallery, New York, 17 September 2015 – 21 February 2016. Loan: Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York. (Photo: Hanna Hölling)

2. Nam June Paik, *Zen For Film*, 1962 – 64. Fluxkit containing a filmstrip. Installation view during the exhibition *Revisions-Zen for Film*, Bard Graduate Center's Focus Gallery, New York, 17 September 2015 – 21 February 2016. Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York. (Photo: Hanna Hölling)

3. Nam June Paik, *Zen For Film*, 1962 – 64. Filmic relic from the 1960s. Installation view during the exhibition *Revisions-Zen for Film*, Bard Graduate Center's Focus Gallery, New York, 17 September 2015 – 21 February 2016. Loan: Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York. (Photo: Hanna Hölling)