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Keeping Artworks Alive in Museums: Presentation 2

Colophon

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핍 로렌슨

발표 2

Presentation 2

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핍 로렌슨은 유니버시티 칼리지 런던(UCL)의 보존학 교수이자 UCL East의 현대미술 및 미디어 보존학 석사 과정 디렉터이다. 현대미술 보존 분야에서 30년의 전문 이력을 보유하고 있으며, 1996년에 선구적으로 테이트에 시간 기반 미디어 보존 부서를 설립하고 2010년까지 총괄했다. 21세기 현대 미술 컬렉션의 보존이 직면한 과제에 대응하고 이를 해결하기 위한 학제간 연구에 전념하고 있다. 2010년부터 2022년까지 테이트의 소장품 관리 연구 책임자였으며, 2018년부터 2022년까지 멜론 재단에서 지원한 프로젝트인 '소장 가능한 것의 재구성 Reshaping the Collectible: When Artworks Live in the Museum'을 기획하고 총괄했다. UCL에서 박사 학위를 받았으며, 영국 보존협회(ICON)의 공인 회원이자, 현대미술 보존을 위한 국제 네트워크인 INCCA의 운영위원으로 활동하고 있다.

Pip Laurenson is the professor of Conservation at UCL and director of the MSc in the Conservation of Contemporary Art and Media at UCL East that opened in September 2023. Pip has 30 years of experience in the conservation of contemporary art, establishing and leading Tate's pioneering Time-based Media Conservation section from 1996 until 2010. Between 2010 and 2022 Pip was Head of Collection Care Research, working to develop, lead and support research related to the conservation and management of Tate's collections. Pip is committed to interdisciplinary research that serves and responds to the art of our time and the major challenges facing the conservation of contemporary collections in the 21st Century. From 2018 to 2022, she led the Mellon Foundation Initiative **Reshaping the Collectible: When Artworks Live in the Museum**. She received her doctorate from UCL, is an accredited member of the Institute for Conservation and is a member of the Steering Committee of the International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art (INCCA).

In 2013 Zeeyoung Chin published an important paper on **32 Cars for the 20th Century: Play Mozart's Requiem Quietly** as part of an interim meeting of the Modern Materials and Contemporary Art Working Group of ICOM-CC dedicated to outdoor sculpture. In this paper there is the following extract from an interview with Mark Patsfall

'Nam June felt the piece should be kept up as long as humanly possible, which was his idea also with his video pieces—technology could be upgraded as long as it did not change the character of the piece until this was no longer possible and the piece could then remain as a document of itself.'

There are two elements of this quote that resonate with me, firstly the idea of working to keep up the piece “as long as humanly possible” and secondly the fact that Nam June Paik had imagined the future life of the work “as a document of itself.” I find these ideas both powerful and beautiful.

Let us start with the idea that ‘the piece should be kept up as long as humanly possible.’ What we see in this exhibition is surely a labour of love. The enormous amount of work that it has taken to maintain and realise this exhibition of these two works so that you can experience them today.

Let us pause for a moment to think back to Mark Patsfall's wonderful presentation about all the things that need to come together both when these works were first created in Münster and New York and today. Taking **32 Cars for the 20th Century: Play Mozart's Requiem Quietly** alone, the cars were sought out (8 from each of the 4 decades from the 1920s to 1950s) and images were sent to Nam June Paik for approval (and I find myself wondering how that was done in 1997 – could we email pictures back then? Was it done with a fax machine? I am sure Mark can tell us – but we certainly did not have the ease of sending a WeChat or Whats App image from our phone). As Mark tells us – the cars were then sent to either Cincinnati or LA, loaded onto ships and transported to Bremen. Discarded televisions from Paik's studio were also gathered that would fill the cars. Imagine the paperwork

involved and the effort of booking the shipping companies, the lifting gear, the customs documents, the diesel, the means to restrain them in transit. They arrived (as we saw from Mark's images lorries were loaded, more paperwork was completed) and they were unloaded and positioned. They were filled with the old televisions and discarded electronics from Paik's studio. They were painted silver by students, the paint, the brushes, the recruitment, the lunches, the camaraderie. And then the sound system was installed, the wiring, the speakers, the testing and of course the managing of complaints. The curators, the press officers, the technical support, the students and the public all involved in one way or another. And this is just the start of this extraordinary life of this artwork, which was then shipped from Germany to Korea to start its life at the Samsung Transportation Museum: climbed on by children, buried in snow, baked in the summer sun. Again, a vast array of people coming together with their skills, expertise and labour – the registrars, the shipping agents (again), the dockworkers, the warehouse folk, the paperwork, followed by the conservators with their campaign to fight the rust every two years, the curators and welcome team to the museum. Most recently an extraordinary conservation campaign to deal with rust, striping back each car, repainting it, repairing the structure with welding, and addressing the interior decay. Finally, bringing these works to the exhibition we see today. This is a very edited account of all the labour, much of it invisible – to make this 'humanly possible.'

A useful concept to help us think about these works is that of assemblage. The philosopher Gilles Deleuze and the psychoanalyst Félix Guattari point to the dynamics in the creation of an assemblage. They speak of the desire or wish that brings together such an assemblage as a productive force, "a spontaneous emergence that generates relationship through a synthesis of multiplicities." Just think of the range of desires and wishes that came together, and continue to come together, for this assemblage from 1997 in

32 Cars for the 20th Century: Play Mozart's Requiem Quietly

to be here in this exhibition. Desire is an intentional motivating force that brings together the assemblage and keeps it together for the achievement of a given end. To quote Deleuze and Guattari, "assemblages are passionate, they are compositions of desire. The rationality, the efficiency, of an assemblage does not exist without the passions the assemblage brings into play, without the desires that constitute it as much as it constitutes them." For Deleuze and Guattari assemblages and desire are inseparably linked, and it again points to this extraordinary coming together of people, things and technologies that carries works such as these across time.

The enormity of the technical, logistical and material challenges that were overcome in the making of these two works, then and now, is so striking to me. These works are so wildly ambitious, they represent an incredible amount of labour – physical and technical and rely on an ecology of people and their skills and deep understanding of these works to continue to present them for us today.

In contemplating these works I can't help thinking of Bifo Berardi who calls for the next revolution to be one of exhaustion but also of poetry – and there is something exhausting in the labour that brought these works into being and that keep them present in the narrative of history, that must be matched in equal measure by their poetry.

What I hope to highlight is simply that the fact that these works are here today is testament to the desire and labour of many people who have cared for these works and continue to care for them – to make this 'humanly possible.'

How are we to think about this network that makes the exhibition of these works 'humanly possible?'

These are works which are not isolated in a museum, but relied and continue to rely on a vast network of care for their realisation and their continued existence. This shift from technologies of the museum that serve to isolate the work from its sociality to acknowledging the relational needs of

the work is actually a shift from possession and a mindset that privileges a certain type of knowledge designed to sever a work from its local context. This shift is rooted in feminist theory and my reference point for the use of the term “relational” here is largely through a lineage of Donna Haraway and María Puig de la Bellacasa’s analysis of care in her book **Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds**. I evoke the “relational” in contrast to possession where the museum is focused on removing the object from its context, severing those ties and placing it within a neutral space to be appreciated as a timeless and transcendent art object and slotted into the museum’s imperialist narrative, part of what Fernando Domínguez Rubio would call “the modern aesthetic regime of art.” In contrast to this process of abstraction is the idea that, to quote Haraway, “nothing comes without its world” where across time and material continuity through shared experiences and memories we can bring traces of a world. To see this world creates a different dynamic in relation to the artwork which characterizes care. As Puig de la Bellacasa points out “Caring and relating share ontological resonance” and she points to political scientist Joan Tronto and feminist educator Berenice Fisher’s definition of care to highlight this relationship as “a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web.”

This ‘species activity’ is what we see here flowing from the words recorded by Mark Patsfall “Nam June felt the piece should be kept up as long as humanly possible” and in the labours of conservation, broadly understood, so beautifully described by my fellow speakers today.

The second part of the quote I would like to consider is the idea that this activity would continue ‘until this was no longer possible and the piece could then remain as a document of itself.’

Contemporary conservation theory embraces the idea that artworks continue to unfold during their lives, with multiple trajectories, in situations where at different times, different aspects come to the fore. I am sure that many of you know this analogy made by Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe between an artwork and a river's catchment and I quote

A given work of art should be compared not to any isolated locus but to a river's catchment, complete with its estuaries, its many tributaries, its dramatic rapids, its many meandering turns and, of course, also, its several hidden sources.

Through the conservation work, again broadly understood as all of the work involved in bringing about this exhibition, these works are once again given a moment of 'dramatic rapids' in their biography, but I also love that Nam June Paik imagined a future for them in quite a different form, as 'a document of themselves.'

Like a time capsule, to be opened once the everything humanly possible has been exhausted there is this possible future life of the artwork which he has evoked, where it can live on as a document of itself.

Recognising the importance of this ecosystem around the work points to the possibilities for creating the way in which we might enable this work to live on. By carefully documenting the memories of those who have worked so closely with these artworks for nearly 30 years – from their conception and their ongoing care – we can try to create a living record that acknowledges and honours the commitment and expertise that exists and has gathered around these works. Perhaps this is the document that Paik refers to.