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AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE DURATIONAL ENGAGEMENT WITH TEMPORARY ARTWORKS

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The Artwork Is Not Present

An investigation into the durational engagement with temporary artworks

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of PhD

History of Art
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Cover illustration: Detail of *Vitrines* (2013) by artist Petrit Halilaj. Part of the exhibition *Poisoned Men in Need of Some Love* organised by WIELS Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels, Belgium (September 7, 2013 - January 5, 2014) curated by Elena Filipovic.
Photograph by Sophie Kromholz.

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Abstract

This thesis presents a conceptual knot, namely of how to sustain the intentionally temporary. Part of the original contribution of this thesis lies in exploring what it means for an artwork to be temporary, tracing the historical context from the twentieth century onwards, thereby establishing the category of temporary artworks, and providing thoughts on how to care for temporary artworks so that they might be known and experienced by future audiences. On the basis of this research, a practical proposal is developed for what a retrospective of temporary artworks might look like.

Temporary artworks should be considered as a category unto their own because of the specific set of constraints which set them apart: they are physical works of art which exist for an intentionally limited amount of time, and are created only once. These specific constraints problematize the engagement of future audiences due to the works' very limited and singular existence as a physical work.

In order to address the issue of how to (re)visit impermanence, I develop the claim that what is passed on from a temporary artwork is contingent on the stakeholders, including the primary audience, who are posited as a group of unintentional archivists holding stock in a type of living archive. After their material unmaking, temporary artworks can be experienced through the notion that 'the artwork is not present', a riff on artist Marina Abramović's retrospective work *The Artist is Present* (2010). A retrospective of temporary artworks would consist of memories and documents contextualizing their fragmentary nature, highlighting what Severin Fowles discusses as 'the carnality of absence'. A clarification of what is missing assists in sustaining what I develop and describe as 'the performance of loss', a critical part of temporary artworks. Stewarding a temporary artwork into the future thus depends on letting the material object go, and contextualizing its presence, loss, and absence for future audiences.

Keywords: Temporary artworks, experience, conservation, memory, documentation, presence, absence, loss

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“To be human is to be aware of the passage of time; no concept lies closer to the core of our consciousness.”

- Dan Falk

“Your sentimentality softens all the edges, you’re misremembering. Take a moment to recall it as it really was: fucking hell.”

- Miranda July

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Tempus Fugit. Onward, as the next chapter opens.

Author's Declaration

Declaration

This thesis represents the original work of Sophie Kromholz unless explicitly stated otherwise in the text. The research upon which it is based was carried out at the University of Glasgow, from October 2011 to September 2015, and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature ______________________________

Printed name Sophie C. Kromholz

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction: Defining the temporary

Imagine you are in a dark brick room with tall ceilings supported by columns. Light pours in through several windows to your right, which illuminate the big cube of ice composed of multiple stacked slabs in the middle of the room. As you approach the work, you see how it is eroding, a process elicited by the core of rock salt hidden within, which is further weathering the cube of ice. You try to avoid stepping in the puddle seeping from the work, which is not quite collapsing, but almost weeping. The work is called *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996), and is situated in a nineteenth century water pumping station in East London. It has been conceived of and created by Scottish artist Anya Gallaccio (b. 1963), who is part of the Young British Artist movement.[1] Her early work, often made of organic materials, explores transformation and change through a literal language of inevitable material loss as her works rapidly physically degrade.

[1] The Young British Artists (YBAs) is a name applied to a loose postmodern group of British artists who began exhibiting together in 1988, initially under the support of art collector Charles Saatchi. They became known for their openness to materials and processes, as well as shock tactics.

Figure 1-1 **Anya Gallaccio, *Intensities and Surfaces*, 1996, ice, rock salt, 118 x 157.5 x 157.5 inches, 34 tons, installation view, Boiler Room, Wapping Pumping Station, London. Image courtesy of the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery, London.**

Figure 1-2 **Anya Gallacio, *Intensities and Surfaces*, 1996, ice, rock salt, 118 x 157.5 x 157.5 inches, 34 tons, installation view, Boiler Room, Wapping Pumping Station, London. Image courtesy of the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery, London.**

Intensities and Surfaces (1996) is now gone, as is the building it was situated in during the spring of 1996. It was a site-specific work, commissioned by the Women's Playhouse Trust, for a specific show, and created as a single installation. Its material unmaking was written into the work's construction through the selection of material and their assembly – stacks of ice with a core of salt, encouraging the physical destruction of the physical object through the inevitable process of melting, which narrates the artwork as a whole. The significance of this working method is that, as artist and art theorist Judith Rugg notes,

> '*Intensities and Surfaces* comes to life by disintegrating and in doing so disappears, becomes absent; it is in a process of revealing – to reveal 'absence' (all is not what it seems).'[2]

Today, we can revisit *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996) only through photographs, stories, and the memories carried by those who saw it.

Trying to address *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996) now is both difficult and problematic, as even as it is broached here, it is a work that is no longer physically present, and one which I have not seen first-hand. Instead, this work is known to current and future audiences through representations in the form of photographs and other accounts of the work. This non-straightforward relationship is inevitably the case with many of the temporary artworks discussed in this thesis. I am conscious that my encounters with these lost temporary artworks is different in comparison with the small and therefore privileged group of individuals who have visited and experienced the temporary artworks discussed first-hand. My relationship to the temporary artworks discussed is formed by the framing of what is left behind, and due to the mediated encounter of documentation misses the total immersive experience of visiting and experiencing the temporary artworks *in situ*. It is precisely this idea of revisiting artworks which are inherently temporary, and furthermore how we might sustain them, in the fullest sense possible, which steers and compels this research. In doing so, this thesis hopes to serve as a guide for thinking about conservation strategies for temporary artworks, in order to promote a durational engagement with artworks which cannot physically last, for audiences who did not experience these temporary artworks first-hand.

A temporary artwork as defined in the scope of this research concerns physical artworks that are produced with an intentionally limited material presence. That is to say

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[2] Judith Rugg, 'Regeneration or Reparation: Death, Loss and Absence in Anya Gallacio's Intensities & Surfaces and Forest Floor', Locality, regeneration & divers[c]ities, Locality, regeneration & divers[c]ities /edited by Sarah Bennett, and John Butler, (ed.), (Bristol: Intellect, 2000).

that there is a material object which does not last. An additional condition for a temporary artwork is that it cannot be reproduced or replicated. Following this condition, the spectrum of temporary artworks includes singular installations which are dismantled and then cease to exist, artworks which degrade and decay, auto-destructive artworks, and other artworks which contain a physical component which exists only within a limited timeframe and then never again. It is important that it is understood that temporary artworks contain a physical element which is destroyed, and that the artwork in question therefore undergoes a physical loss and furthermore, that the work cannot be repeated. The material component that literally dematerializes critically excludes performance art from being considered within this thesis, although there are comparable issues, as temporary artworks and performance art can both be said to be performative and performing artworks, the specifics of which are taken up in Chapter 5.

Moreover, rather than discuss temporary artworks as literally 'dematerializing', the choice goes to discussing temporary artworks as being physically 'unmade'. This is because of the associations that go hand in hand with the term 'dematerialization', connecting it with critical theorist Lucy Lippard and critic John Chandler's canonical writing on conceptual art.[3] Material unmaking, although also loaded as a term, does not carry the same history, and therefore avoids the pitfall of confusion, and allows me to set out a process which forms a critical aspect of the life of temporary artworks – their material shaping, and in turn the transformation into non-object through the process of material unmaking. The process of material unmaking shapes how a temporary artwork is experienced, but also, together with singular execution, highlights questions around both long term care and experience. British artist Richard Galpin (b. 1975) discusses this process of unmaking as a kind of erasure.[4] The material erasure of a temporary artwork thwarts traditional strategies of care. As such, temporary artworks can be considered non-traditional artworks, although their development can be traced from the twentieth century onwards, as covered in Chapter 2.

The term 'temporary' is applied to denote this limited timeframe and set it apart from other terms, such as 'ephemeral art' and 'art ephemera', which include the types of artworks discussed here, but also cover a much wider scope which indicates material fragility, but does not necessarily engage with this as an intentional aspect. Furthermore, alternative terms such as 'fugitive' imply a notion of fleeing or escaping which is not appropriate or applicable to all of the artworks considered. 'Transient' could have been

[3] Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, 'The Dematerialization of Art', *Art International* (February, 1968): 31-6.
[4] Richard Galpin, 'Erasure in Art: Destruction, Deconstruction, and Palimpsest' (February 1998), http://www.richardgalpin.co.uk/archive/erasure.html, (accessed August 3, 2015).

used as an alternative to temporary; however, the choice has fallen on temporary because of its clear etymological link to *tempor* – time, emphasizing this aspect. Moreover, temporary art is not a widely used term or category, thereby avoiding confusion with the associations pulled from broader terms which sometimes share characteristics with temporary artworks as defined in this thesis, but further encompass a much broader spectrum. For example, *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996) is considered a temporary artwork as it follows the framework of ephemerality which defines the temporary artwork in this thesis – it is a physical work, created once, with an intentionally limited physical lifespan. As per the artist's intent, there has been only a single iteration of this particular artwork, and due to the work's selection of materials and construction, the work has intentionally unmade itself through a process of melting. The original material construction of *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996) is now gone forever. Interestingly, other ephemeral works by the same artist are not necessarily temporary artworks.

Figure 1-3 Anya Gallaccio, Red on Green, 1992, 10 000 red roses, installation view, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London. Image courtesy of the James Hyman Collection.

Red on Green (1992), a Gallaccio piece consisting of 10 000 red roses cut from their stalks, with their red heads laid across the green stems in a rectangle, is also ephemeral. The work is displayed for a set amount of months, during which the flowers inevitably age and decompose. The artist has recreated *Red on Green* multiple times, and the work is

therefore not a temporary artwork. The single iteration of the original work is a critical component of what defines the temporary artwork, and sets it apart from works which are ephemeral, but can be repeated.

Applying and defining the term temporary artworks enables this research to clarify the scope of works considered by clearly defining them, and with this, also critically indicates what falls outside this spectrum. This thesis constructs the category of temporary artworks, as it specifically emphasizes the following three critical points: intentionality, number of iterations vs singularity, and the role and importance of the artwork's material. In order to understand the framework of temporary artworks and identify them it is in fact necessary to think of these critical points. The category of temporary artworks is needed because it identifies a specific group of artworks which meet the outlined criteria of physical works, created for an intentionally limited duration and made only once. The long term care of these artworks – temporary artworks – is not currently dealt with in a uniform matter, and as such this research addresses a gap in approach for both thinking about and caring for these specific artworks. Moreover, research into the category of temporary artworks and strategies for their long term care also provides crucial insights into the more general practice of conservation and collecting practices of modern and contemporary art.

In what follows, I will elaborate on the scope of the study, after which I will illuminate critical debates and literature on contemporary art collecting and conservation and how this research addresses a gap in current theory. I will then elaborate on the issues and stakes presented by temporary art practice, after which I will define the objectives and broader implications of this research. Finally, I will delineate both the methodology and thesis structure, so as to clarify how the questions and arguments underpinning this research unfold.

1.2 Scope of the study

This thesis sets out to investigate alternative means to securing a legacy for temporary artworks as defined in this thesis. Finding a means to communicate temporary artworks to non-primary audiences, though difficult, recognises the significance of temporary artworks and enables them to continue to shape and be part of the dialogue and canons of creative practice, even after they are physically unmade. Temporary artworks speak of particular practices and a particular time. As an art historian, my interest is in finding a way to ensure that the canons of art history are as a complete as they can possibly be. My interest in conserving temporary artworks lies in finding a means of being able to speak about these works and experience temporary artworks in the future. Caring for temporary artworks, as

put forward in this thesis, requires letting the material go, while considering other ways of carrying a temporary artwork forward and allowing it to reach later audiences. As such, this thesis engages with the discussion of how to care for and experience temporary artworks in order to promote durational engagement, even after they are physically unmade.

The intended temporary nature of temporary artworks makes traditional modes of conservation aimed at stabilising their material, as well as more current modes of preservation through documentation, controversial. The fragility and finitude of a temporary artwork is part of its *raison d'être* and creates a tension wherein which immediacy is a critical component which shapes its experience. The urgency that makes temporary artworks interesting, however, also brings into question how, if at all, temporary artworks can be cared for long-term, and how possible care impacts their integrity. Ethics invariably become involved as the issue goes further than a basic matter of sustaining the work – the discussion at hand includes understanding the consequences and compromises which inform how we might imagine a future for temporary artworks.

In participating in this discussion, this thesis expands upon the discussion of what it means to care for non-traditional artworks, such as temporary artworks, and also serves as a guide with a framework of questions and tools for consideration. The research question specifically asked is: 'How can a temporary artwork be conserved without its physical object which is unmade?' The aim is to systematically reflect upon the theoretical and ethical problems posed by temporary artworks while trying to secure a future for them, to contribute to the discussion of conservation decision-making processes, while also developing a practical approach to aid in the future engagement with temporary artworks.

1.3 Critical debates and literature on contemporary art collecting and conservation

Temporary artworks have evolved from the legacy of the twentieth century as discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2. From the Dada art movement onwards we can trace an open approach toward restructuring and challenging what was accepted as art, and, paired with this, the use of unconventional materials, as well as a blurring between performance and object. The ramifications of this are that as artists began to explore the framework of what could be considered an artwork, and the parameters of the art world itself, the defining components of both came into question.[5] The significance of these creative inquiries lies in

[5] Applying the term 'artworld' as coined by critical theorist Arthur Danto in his seminal essay 'The Artworld'. Arthur C. Danto, 'The Artworld', *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 61, No. 19, American

the implied questioning of the behaviour and practices of institutions, such as the sacred space of the museum and the art world.[6] As this inquisitive line of practice continued, creative work began to approach what French artist Yves Klein (b. 1928 - 1962) deemed 'the evolution of art towards the immaterial' where the artwork gradually and radically became less tied to its material form, and more driven by ideas.[7] This led to new ideas of performance and the artwork as spectacle, as was evident in some of Klein's own works of the time, including *Le Vide* of 1958, in which Klein emptied a gallery space and painted it white, creating a performance spectacle around the hype of the opening night.[8] The creative act of questioning the necessity for art to exist as material object was pushed to its furthest extreme by the historical development of the afore-discussed dematerialization of art.[9] As clarified by curator Michael Rush, through the dematerialization of art, 'visual literacy [was] no longer limited to the "art object"', with which Rush elucidates that experience came to the forefront, and making art was no longer solely dependent on producing and presenting a physical artwork.[10] The implications of this are that material objects as artworks became less important.

In the wake of the dematerialisation of art, further explorations into artworks and their relationship to objecthood have continued to challenge the previously overarching importance of the material object. Instead, increasingly an artworks' primary value can be placed in 'the non-material realm of experience'.[11] Accordingly, this requires an adaptation of where we place the authenticity and integrity of an artwork. Faced with changes in creative practices, conservators have begun to rethink their methodologies as they are faced with the inclusion of new materials, technologies and conceptually driven art.[12] The key need for change in conservation theory and approach has surfaced through the use of novel materials, increased vulnerability to physical defects and technological obsolescence, performative aspects e.g. the use of motion and sound, and (the conscious employment of) rapid decay. The development of conservation philosophy as covered in Chapter 3 has

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Philosophical Association Eastern Division Sixty-First Meeting (October 15, 1964): 571-584.

[6] Carol Duncan, 'Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship', *Exhibiting Cultures: the poetics and politics of museum display*, ed. Ivan Karp, and Steven D. Lavine, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991).

[7] Yves Klein, 'The Evolution of Art towards the Immaterial', [1959], *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas,* ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 818.

[8] Known in full as La spécialisation de la sensibilité à l'état matière première en sensibilité picturale stabilisée, Le Vide (The specialisation of sensibility in the raw material state of stabilised pictorial sensibility, The Void).

[9] Note that the term implied the privilege of idea over the significance of the material matter, not the literal dematerialization of the art object. Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, 'The Dematerialization of Art', *Art International*, (February 1968): 31–6.

[10] Michael Rush, *New Media in Late 20th-Century Art* (London: Thames and Hudson 1999), 171.

[11] Glenn Wharton, 'The Challenges of Conserving Contemporary Art', *Collecting the New*, ed., Bruce Altshuler (Princeton University Press, 2005), 163.

[12] Ibid.

been assisted by the formalisation of ethical and professional standards within the field throughout the twentieth century, as membership organizations began to form with stipulated codes of ethics and standards for practice.[13] Alongside these changes, various international conferences, all with subsequent publications, have been called to tackle the question of how to cope with contemporary artworks. These developments have assisted in creating a pluralist model of cooperative research, which is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4. However, there is still a gap present in how to care for and present temporary artworks to future audiences. This research addresses the present gap.

1.4 The issues and the stakes

This thesis presents a conceptual knot – the inevitable heterodox of trying to sustain the intentionally temporary. The issues and the stakes are best illustrated in discussion of exemplary temporary artworks. *Bloom* (2003), a site-specific installation by German-born American artist Anna Schuleit (b. 1974), whose projects centre around the themes of seriality and memory, is another artwork which no longer exists, and that cannot be recreated, as it was a site-specific commission for a condemned building that no longer stands.[14] *Bloom* (2003) addressed the persistent absence of flowers in psychiatric hospital settings.[15] The installation consisted of 28 000 potted, blooming flowers arranged by colour and spread like monochrome seas across four floors of the former Massachusetts Mental Health Center. The audience visiting the installation was invited to walk along the hallways, carpeted with sod, and to peer across the stretches of flowers filling each floor. In the background the sound of old recordings from the building, while still in function, calling out old announcements, buzzed from the public announcement system. Open for only four days in November 2003, this work has vanished. And just as with *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996), the building in which the site-specific work was housed no longer exists.

[13] This includes the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC) founded in 1950; the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice of the American Institute for Conservation, 1994; the Professional Guidelines of the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorer' Organizations (ECCO), 1993; and the Code of Ethics of the International Council of Museums – Conservation Committee, 1984.
[14] The artist has since married and changed her surname to Schuleit Haber, but requested her maiden name be used when discussing this work.
[15] Anna Schuleit, 'Bloom', (2003), http://annaschuleit.com/bloom.html, (accessed May 5, 2015).

Figure 1-4 Anna Schuleit, Bloom, 2003, site-specific installation incl. 28 000 flowers in bloom, 5 600 sq ft of live sod, and recorded sound. Detail of basement with sod, Massachusetts Mental Health Center, Boston, MA. Image courtesy of the artist.

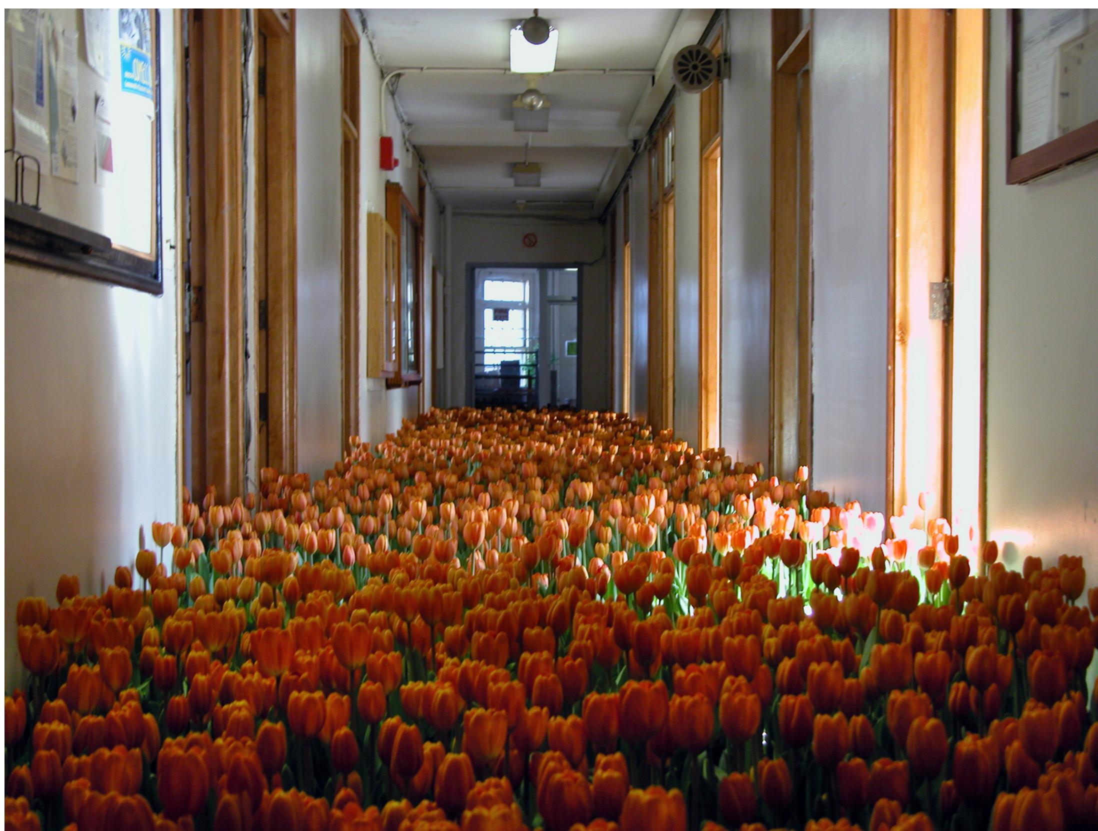

Figure 1-5 Anna Schuleit, *Bloom*, 2003, site-specific installation incl. 28 000 flowers in bloom, 5 600 sq ft of live sod, and recorded sound. Detail of Orange Tulips, 3rd floor, Massachusetts Mental Health Center, Boston, MA. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 1-6 Anna Schuleit, *Bloom*, 2003, site-specific installation incl. 28 000 flowers in bloom, 5 600 sq ft of live sod, and recorded sound. Detail of African Violets, 1st floor, Massachusetts Mental Health Center, Boston, MA. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 1-7 Anna Schuleit, *Bloom*, 2003, mixed media installation incl. 28 000 flowers in bloom, 5 600 sq ft of live sod, and recorded sound. Detail of Heather, 3rd floor Massachusetts Mental Health Center, Boston, MA. Image courtesy of the artist.

Lingering thoughts, stories, and photographs are the only ways through which Bloom (2003) endures. It is specifically these lingering by-products of experience and the material work which are critical in reconsidering the future of temporary artworks and which clarify the tension that exists for temporary artworks. In order for a temporary artwork to be completed, it must become physically obsolete through its material unmaking. This is put forward as a kind of loss, as the immersive first-hand experience of a temporary artwork is only possible for a limited and privileged group and does not translate to other experiences, such as the more accessible non-primary experience of the artwork. Faithfulness to an artwork's original material is displaced by temporary artworks, which instead require faithfulness to the experience of loss as promoted by the knowledge that a temporary artwork has a limited physical presence that cannot be reproduced or re-manifested in a traditional sense.

Within this thesis, I propose that the idea of performance can also be applied to temporary artworks, which fall prey to the same limitations performance theorist Peggy Phelan posits for performance art pieces.[16] The urgency of a temporary artwork lies in its

[16] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 146.

limited presence. Later access to an unmade temporary artwork, via for instance documentation or even narration, cannot fully stand in place of the original material aspect of the artwork. Secondary access performs different things and differently to the initial material object which is unmade. As such there is a kind of hierarchy of the live.

In application to temporary artworks, the performative is the act of invoking the experience of loss through a physical language of loss.[17] The performance is the embodied enactment of events, e.g. the material loss. Therefore, a temporary artwork can be said to be a performative work, which invokes the theme of loss through a performance shaped by a literal language of material loss.

This performance of loss is an evident theme in American artist Tawny Kerr's (b. 1987) temporary artworks, which often consist of biodegradable elements which do not physically stand the test of time. Kerr's working ethos is, as she discusses it, 'an investigation of memory and nostalgia, representing a struggle between an inward desire to preserve and the destructive reality of passing time.'[18] Highlighting fragility and challenging stability allows the artist to play with structure and expectation. Loss is a large part of the poetics on which the artist's oeuvre plays. Kerr talks about her work playing with representations of the grotesque, handled delicately. The artist's work *Lemon Chandelier* was exhibited in October 2012 as part of *Launch*, the inaugural group exhibition at Verge: Glasgow Artist Studios, and later dismantled by the artist.

Lemon Chandelier (2012) consisted of a metal framework, with peeled strands of lemon cut at different times, some already wrinkled and weathered, while those freshly cut remained fragrant and juicy. The citrus strands dangled from each of the three tiered hoops. The studio audience was inevitably confronted with the work aging. The process of decline was visible from the strands which had already aged differently, and therefore served as a reminder of the inevitability of the work's decay – both the audience and the physical changes in the fruit bearing witness to this. The choice of material aided *Lemon Chandelier* (2012) in performing its swan song, necessarily making the work fragile and predicting its finitude, this vulnerability charging the work. *Lemon Chandelier* (2012) played on immediate experience, speaking of durability through its physical impossibility. The sweetness of the work was placed in its urgency.

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[17] The notion that artworks 'perform' is informed by philosopher John Langshaw Austin's speech act theory, and discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. Performance and performativity, though often used interchangeably, have subtle differences. The act which brings the subject into being, or the 'process of invoking the subject' is performative.

[18] Tawny Kerr, *Personal Interview*, (March 30, 2015).

Figure 1-8 Tawny Kerr, *Lemon Chandelier*, 2012, mixed media incl. lemons, detail, Verge Gallery, Glasgow. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 1-9 Tawny Kerr, *Lemon Chandelier*, 2012, mixed media incl. lemons, Verge Gallery, Glasgow. Image courtesy of the artist.

Today, nothing remains, save for the story of the work encapsulated in experiences turned into memories, a handful of photos, and a single lemon strand formerly cascading from the sculpture. It is in my possession, a keepsake from a show I was not able to witness – therefore further estranging the remnant from the whole. This relic, as the artist has stated, is not the artwork.[19] *Lemon Chandelie*r (2012) no longer exists. This particular work, as the artist herself deems it, and is supported in this research, functioned only in the present, as a material whole. However, it follows that one might ask what happens to artworks, such as *Lemon Chandelier* (2012), when they cease to exist as complete physical works.

The performance of a temporary artwork is tied to the performativity of the

[19] Tawny Kerr, *Personal Interview*, (March 30, 2015).

materially unmade artwork, which places a finite cap on the work. The work is here and then gone, and following performance theorist Peggy Phelan, later translations of the work – to be understood as any mediated way in which the artwork is carried forward, including restaging, but also documentation – cannot stand in for the lost artwork.[20] However, this is not to say that remnants or the revisiting of a work are not valuable, but it is critical that the context and relationship of what is presented is made clear.

The practiced pedagogy of traditional conservation theory emphasizes the significance of preserving a material artefact as a means of carrying an artwork forward. This is no longer applicable or desirable for temporary artworks, which instead require a means of being sustained without their original material, thereby respecting a framework which dictates an artwork's right to 'decay with dignity'.[21] Temporary artworks defy the notion that conservation ethics are universal, as conservator Debra Hess-Norris has asserted.[22]

Rather, in line with Katrina Windon, I argue that artworks which intentionally disappear require a new ethic, namely one of letting go.[23] This new ethic is not as bold as it might seem, or counter to conservation practice either. The original purpose of collecting and conserving can be understood as lying in facilitating 'a discourse about the meaning of [artworks] individual character and to imagine their hidden relationships to one another'.[24] Following this statement, made by Charles R. Garoian, it becomes apparent that conserving the original material of an artwork is no longer always necessary. Rather, to conserve the material object and forgo the process of material unmaking would render a temporary artwork incomplete. Instead, I develop and put forward the claim that the experience of loss is to be continued, which requires a different way of thinking about collecting and conserving. In essence, this is a call to reconfigure how to construct and perform *lieux de memoire* through alternative conserving and collecting behaviour, thereby

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[20] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, New York and London 1993, p.146; This thesis employs the term 'lost artwork' to connote a temporary artwork which no longer physically exists in its original material form. This term is borrowed from the Tate's immersive online exhibition *The Gallery of Lost Art*, held June 2012 through July 2013, and subsequent publication: Jennifer Mundy, *Lost Art* (London: Tate Publishing, 2013). The exhibition and publication defined lost artworks as those which cannot be owned by museums due to their material state. The Tate included destroyed, missing, and incomplete works. As temporary artworks become physically obsolete, the term 'lost artworks' feels equally apt after their physical unmaking, as they too cannot be traditionally owned due to their physical state.

[21] Katrina Windon, 'The Right to Decay with Dignity: Documentation and the Negotiation between an Artist's Sanction and the Cultural Interest', *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America*, vol. 31, (2012): 142-157, 142.

[22] Debra Hess-Norris, 'The Survival of Contemporary Art: The Role of the Conservation Professional in this Delicate Ecosystem', *Mortality Immortality?: The Legacy of 20th-Century Art*, ed. Miguel Angel Corzo (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 1999), 131.

[23] Windon, 143.

[24] Charles R. Garoian, 'Performing the Museum', *Studies in Art Education*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Spring, 2001): 234-248, 235.

respecting the framework of a temporary artwork, as well as critically illustrating and delineating this framework of temporality for future audiences. Rather than simply letting go of temporary artworks completely, the question becomes: 'How can we instead think of collecting and conserving in service to these new artistic movements, so that we might steward them into the future?'

There is a line of thinking within the art world that suggests there is no future for temporary artworks. From a curator's point of view, Peter Canon-Brookes describes works which are temporary as being 'uncollectible', stating that the very nature of the materials and how they are employed to create the work means that they are inherently not conservable.[25] If temporary artworks cannot be conserved and therefore must physically disappear, a possible argument follows that these types of artworks should be allowed to vanish. As put forward even more strongly, by conservator Frederik Leen, 'the museum cannot save/preserve something the nature of which is to draw its 'raison d'être' from its decay' – 'it is not possible to conserve a fire longer than it is burning.'[26] Similarly, philosopher Arthur Danto critically asserts that it is not a conservator's task to involve oneself with 'suicide prevention' for works which require degradation.[27] In line with this reasoning it becomes clear that temporary artworks do not lend themselves to traditional collecting practices and that it is it is questionable whether they *should* even be collected, if this is not what they are made for.[28] As such, one might think the best approach is to live and let die, so to speak. This is the most straightforward approach.

However, it is also unsatisfactory, as it means that not only will nothing remain for present viewers as temporary artworks unmake themselves, but furthermore nothing is left for posterity. As Roy Perry, head of conservation at the Tate, emphasizes, 'if we do not preserve the art of today for tomorrow's audience, their knowledge and experience of our culture will be, sadly, impoverished.'[29] What is at stake is the experience of temporary artworks and any notion of them having been. This abdication of responsibility seems in part in accordance with the nature of temporary artworks, and potentially with the artists' intentions. However, it negates a responsibility to carry temporary artworks forward for future audiences. Though the rationale to do nothing is straightforward, it does not rise to

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[25] Peter Cannon-Brookes, 'Impermanence: A Curator's Viewpoint', *Leonardo*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Winter, 1983): 34-35, 34.

[26] Frederik Leen, 'Should Museums Collect Ephemeral Art?', *Modern Art: Who Cares? An Interdisciplinary Research Project and an International Symposium on the Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art*, ed. IJsbrand Hummelen and Dionne Sillé (London: Archetype Publications, 1999): 259-262, 376.

[27] Louisa Buck and Judith Greer, *Owning Art: the contemporary art collector's handbook* (London: Cultureshock Media 2006), 215.

[28] Leen, 375.

[29] Roy Perry, 'Present and Future: Caring for contemporary art at the Tate gallery', *Mortality Immortality?: The Legacy of 20th-Century Art*, ed., Miguel Angel Corzo (J. Paul Getty Trust, Los Angelos: Getty Conservation Institute, 1999), 44.

the challenge of the questions posed by temporary artworks, such as what it means for a work to endure, how to care for them, and how to continue to experience them.

Conservator Pip Laurenson proposes that conservation efforts focus on the 'identity' rather than the 'state' of an object.[30] Although Laurenson develops this framework for time-based media artworks, she critically notes that she would envision its use for a wider range of artworks. Temporary artworks befit this model of thinking as they fall prey to comparable conservation difficulties as found in time-based media artworks. Temporary artworks are similarly not static objects, but rather performative works which perform change and which degrade and therefore require similar creative solutions in order to be understood and experienced once their material has become obsolete. Moreover, the struggles of trying to sustain temporary artworks align themselves with those posed in the broader discourse of modern and contemporary art collection and conservation. In doing so these struggles echo the research problems faced surrounding wider practices, asking alongside projects such as Inside Installations: 'How can we safeguard these expressions of our contemporary visual culture so that they can be experienced by future generations?'[31]

1.5 Objectives and broader implications

Temporary artworks are a category which I open up in this research in order to address a specific set of constraints that certain artworks face, namely the intentional ephemerality of certain material artworks which are created only once. Temporary artworks can be considered a problematic category as it is not a widely used category and as such there may be some misunderstanding as to what is being researched; however, this issue is addressed by clearly setting out what temporary artworks are and how they can be recognized as such, which is detailed in Chapter 3. The category of temporary artworks is useful because it specifically addresses the difficulties posed by the intentionally ephemeral, namely how to understand the role of material, the audience, and the contextualization of presence.

The most important concepts and contributions developed in this research include the following. I trace the lineage of temporary artworks and clarify how temporary artworks can be recognized and distinguished. I contextualize contemporary conservation theory, clarifying among others, the importance of the artist's intent and how this is held

[30] Pip Laurenson, 'Authenticity, Change and Loss in the Conservation of Time-Based Media Installations', *Tate Papers*, Issue 6 (October 2006), http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/authenticity-change-and-loss-conservation-time-based-media, (accessed January 5, 2015).

[31] Tatja Scholte and Glenn Wharton, ed., *Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 13.

against the intentions of other stakeholders. I use Dewey's theory of art as experience, which I apply specifically to temporary artworks, through which the significance of the primary versus non-primary audience's experience is unpacked. I illustrate through discussion around specific case studies how what is passed on from a temporary artwork is contingent on the stakeholders, including the primary audience, who are posited as a group of unintentional archivists holding stock in a living archive. Within this discussion it is made evident that what is handed on is always incomplete, and also prone to change. Memory is fallible and documentation requires context. The most critical concept developed is that temporary artworks engage in a performance of loss, which can be experienced both in a temporary artwork's presence, as well as in its absence. Temporary artworks experienced after their material unmaking can be experienced with the notion that 'the artwork is not present', a riff on artist Marina Abramovic's retrospective work *The Artist is Present* (2014). Over the course of this research I have developed the proposal that a retrospective of temporary artworks would consist of memories and documents contextualizing their fragmentary nature to unmade temporary artworks, highlighting 'the carnality of absence' and thus continuing a so-called performance of loss.[32] A retrospective of temporary artworks is by default an exhibition without artworks, and instead presents a clarification of what is missing, revealing absence and thereby sustaining the ethos of the unmade temporary artworks.

Though the material artwork is not present, the absence of a temporary artwork can be amplified through the development of the artwork's traces, namely memory and documents. The implication of which is that rather than expect traces of a former artwork to perform the lost work, these tools can perform the loss of the unmade artwork and ultimately sustain its absence.[33] At the crux of temporary artworks lies the theme of loss and its inevitability; they are works which cannot be owned in a traditional sense, and therefore always lie beyond our fingertips, ever so slightly out of reach. Temporary artworks move away from being objects through their physical finitude. Accordingly, this thesis proposes that we move towards thinking of conservation as a way of trying to preserve the performance of loss. The absence of a material artwork is not something to compensate for, but rather to contextualize. By maintaining a theme of loss, it is proposed that a temporary artwork's stake is still evident.

In discussing how to sustain the temporary, this investigation touches upon ethics,

[32] Severin Fowles, "People without things", *The Anthropology of Absence: Materialisations of Transcendence and Loss*, edited by Mikkel Bille, Frida Hastrup, and Tim Flohr Sørensen, (Springer Press, New York, 2010): 23-41, 25.

[33] A detailed discussion of performance and performativity and how they relate to temporary artworks is developed in Chapter 5.

as well as pragmatics – considering both what should and can be done to temporary artworks after they physically cease to be. This is done through exploring the boundaries and confines that shape temporary artworks. Understanding where these boundaries lie enables us to postulate over what is permissible and ultimately possible in trying to imagine how to conceive of a legacy. Moreover, when we identify the structure with which to address a future for temporary works, we can apply and extend these ideas and tools to other artworks.

The discussion which unfolds in this research, namely how to help temporary artworks endure, is relevant for all of the stakeholders interested in and impacted by the good care of temporary artworks. Good care specifically pertains to ideas around the best conservation practices which do not harm the integrity of temporary artworks. As such, I have written this thesis with a wide audience range in mind, including historians, but also curators, collectors, conservators and art audiences – all those who might encounter temporary artworks and be concerned with their future.

1.6 Methodology

This thesis provides an account of the complexities and uncertainties that exist within the discussion around contemporary art conservation, specifically focusing on temporary artworks, which can be understood as experience driven artworks which engage in a performance of loss. The research is both descriptive and historical, taking a qualitative approach. An initial literature review was conducted, including material and theory from the fields of art theory, conservation, aesthetics, philosophy, semiotics and linguistics, the findings of which are addressed throughout this research. The most important theories include: John Dewey's concept of art as experience, performance theory as applied by Dorothea van Hantelmann in application to documentation and 'the live', memory theory, and the notion of an artwork's biography originating with Arjun Appadurai, and trajectory, developed by Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe, the latter two concepts having been applied to the conservation of modern and contemporary artworks in the theoretical works of Renée van de Vall and Vivian van Saaze.[34]

[34] John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: The Berkeley Publishing Group, [1934] 2005); Dorothea von Hantelmann, *How to Do Things With Art* (Zürich: Diaphanes 2007); Arjun Appadurai, 'Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value', *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed., Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986): 3-63; Bruno Latour, and Adam Lowe, 'The migration of the aura, or How to explore the original through its facsimiles,' *Switching Codes: Thinking Through Digital Technology in the Humanities and the* Arts, ed., Thomas Bartscherer and Roderick Coover (University Of Chicago Press, 2011), 278.; Renée van de Vall et al. 'Managing Change' Reflections on a Biographical Approach to Contemporary Art Conservation', paper for *ICOM-CC: 16th Triennial Conference, Lisbon* (19-23 September 2011), 6; Vivian van Saaze, *Doing Artworks: A Study into*

The approach taken has been informed by my research background in technical art history, which is to say that I have looked at varied sources to register the artist's voice, and other testimonies on artistic practice in order to consolidate the framework in which temporary artworks exist, and to construct an all-inclusive understanding for recognizing and approaching temporary artworks in order to inform their good care and how they might be encountered and experienced after they are physically lost.

Art historical research often borrows from other fields, and inevitably carries a subjective element due to the personal readings and analysis of the works discussed. I must remain critical of my own position within this research, notably because I too have often experienced the temporary artworks discussed through non-primary means, such as through the lens or frame of a document or oral account. I have to consider what this does to my reading of the work. This does not render the critical assessments developed valueless, as there is arguably also the inevitability that most of the temporary artworks discussed within this body of research cannot be experienced first-hand. It is, however, relevant to understand what it is to experience them second-hand and to consider the implications of how these temporary artworks can be passed on to other parties, as well as how this process of narrating the work might continue, constantly further diluting the experience between the audience and the original object.

Working with the documents and accounts left behind, methodology is borrowed from visual research, applying the approach of visual researcher Claudia Mitchell in her seminal work: 'Doing Visual Research'.[35] The visual documents analysed in this thesis become what Mitchell deems 'texts of visual research in and of themselves'.[36] A visual document, such as a photograph, although often used to replace a lost artwork as a conservative measure (elaborated upon in Chapter 4), also has the potential to represent what Mitchell discusses as 'the presence of absence' (developed and explored in relation to finding alternative conservation strategies in Chapter 5).[37] Whereas Mitchell discusses looking for absence in terms of finding what is not present, this theme can be pushed further, as proposed here, in order to also describe looking at things which are no longer there, and the forced confrontation of seeing present what is in fact absent.

The research project is formalized around the problem of how to conserve a temporary artwork without the physical object, so that future audiences may engage with

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the Presentation and Conservation of Installation Artworks (Maastricht: Universiteit Maastricht, 2009), 28.

[35] Mitchell, Claudia, *Doing Visual Research* (London: Sage Publications, 2011).

[36] Ibid., 37.

[37] Ibid., 97.

and experience some facet of the work. This is a question which can be divided into the theory, ethics, and pragmatic possibilities for the good care of temporary artworks. The research question is addressed through exploring the historical artistic lineage from which temporary artworks arise, contextualizing contemporary conservation practice, elucidating the significant role of experience within temporary artworks, and analysing the role of loss.

Multiple stakeholders' points of view are discussed and taken into account, because it seems critical to view the discussion from the differing dynamic points of view which shape it. My own role within this research as art historian is to understand how artworks are presented and experienced and can continue to be cared for and experienced in order to assure future knowledge of and engagement with these types of artworks. However, my own position within this research is always from the perspective of an art historian. Echoing my predecessor Erwin Panofsky, I am 'not faced by the task of arresting what would otherwise slip away [as arguably with the traditional role of the conservator], but enlivening what would otherwise remain dead'.[38] How do we bring life to what is no longer there and thus carry a temporary artwork forward after it has been unmade?

The research design includes several case studies which are covered throughout the thesis and analysed in relation to the respective chapter theme in. Case studies are approached through historical inquiry, information obtained through research and literature reviewed, as well as artist interviews which I have conducted specifically for this research. The case studies selected have been chosen to cover and illustrate the range that exists within temporary artworks. The case studies encompass works made by male and female artists, from different countries, using different materials, making different constructions, and whose temporary artworks inhabit the notion of material unmaking differently. This is done in order to present a rich array of works which can all be considered temporary artworks. They do not constitute a statistical sample, but instead, critically, all the works discussed which can be considered temporary artworks are tied together by the three criteria which define a temporary artwork: they are physical works of an intentionally temporary duration which are created only once. Through looking at multiple temporary artworks, it becomes possible to examine how temporary artworks can be approached and the discussion around them is informed. It is through this examination of several case studies, using a combination of art historical theory, conservation theory, performance theory, and memory theory, looking at specific temporary artworks, what their creators have said about them in writing as well as in discussion with me directly, what other

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[38] Erwin Panofsky, 'The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline', in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (New York: Doubleday, 1955), 24.

stakeholders including curators, conservators, collectors and art audiences have said about their own roles and experiences of these specific temporary artworks, that I have developed the concept of 'the living archive' composed of the experiences and subsequent memories of 'unintentional archivists', who together through their memory and alongside documentation can put forward retrospective exhibitions without material artworks. This research uncovers the importance of absence as the primary force through which temporary artworks persist and their performance of loss is continued, and proposes that this contextualization of absence is used for durational engagement with temporary artworks.

These original contributions are applied together to synthesize the practical suggestion of how to envision a future exhibition of lost temporary artworks, namely to put forward an exhibition without physical objects, which presents their absence and engages and interacts with the performance of loss through the memories and documents left behind, staging what is missing, and thereby recognizing that, as echoed in the thesis title, 'the artwork is not present'.

1.7 Thesis structure

The argument unfolds as follows – the present chapter establishes the framework and significance of the research. After which the second chapter provides a historical timeline of the *avant-garde* art movements of the twentieth century which have paved the way for the practice of making temporary artworks.

The third chapter, establishes the history of modern conservation theory and practice. It furthermore explores how to identify temporary artworks, the artist's intent, material selection and unmaking, the roles that different stakeholders could have in conserving temporary artworks and the current conservation methods applied, with a notable reliance on documentation as a means to record and/or substitute for lost material artworks. It illustrates how the field is still open and developing, leaving space for alternative strategies.

The fourth chapter, 'Temporary Art as Experience', builds on the idea of art as experience, which was first developed by John Dewey in the early 1930s. The significance of the relationship between the viewer and the temporary artwork is explored, specifically considering on what the experience of the temporary artwork is dependent. Close attention is paid to the aesthetics and longevity of temporary artworks, and how these affect the way the viewer experiences the work.

The fifth chapter, 'The Performance of Loss', develops the hypothesis that temporary artworks perform loss, while also exploring the idea of an artwork as having a

‘career’ and ‘biography’, specifically relating the significance of this to temporary artworks. The concept of ‘a living archive’ is developed and put forward, proposing that this concept can be used as a tool together with memory and documentation.[39] It is asserted that when appropriately contextualized, these tools, which function as traces of the work, can continue to portray the loss of the work and its process of material unmaking, thus continuing the work’s legacy. This continuation, which stages the artwork and manages to perform the loss which is so critical for its reading, could therefore be considered an alternative means of conservation. This notion of sustaining loss and amplifying the absence of the artwork as a means of conservation represents the original contribution of this thesis.

To conclude, Chapter 6, ‘The Future of Temporary Artworks’, provides an overview of the complexities of envisioning a future for temporary artworks, tying together the various components which form the framework for temporary artworks and clarifying how this framework can accommodate possible translations of temporary works in order to sustain these works for the future. This concluding process emphasizes the complex needs of temporary artworks and puts forth possible solutions that can inform their successful stewarding into the future as well as future research suggestions.

I recapitulate the argument developed and supported in this research, that absence can make a temporary artwork just as real as its physical presence. Encounters and thus experiences are still possible after a physical artwork is unmade; however, the audience becomes complicit in continuing physically lost temporary artworks. The audience must become aware of and acknowledge what was and no longer is. Future encounters and experiences are steeped in the tension of recognizing something which is simultaneously made present, although absent. That is to say that future art audiences are faced with artworks which are physically gone, while the artwork as a whole still manages to persist in some fashion. A temporary artwork is more than the sum of its physical parts, but without these physical parts relies on witnesses and fragments. Without an art audience to (re)visit and remember lost artworks, they simply cease to be. Experience acknowledges temporary artworks. A contextualization of absence and what is lost assists in framing a temporary artwork’s performance of loss and enables future audiences to experience what

[39] Although documentation is already commonly used in conservation practices, as discussed in Chapter 4, it will be made clear how documentation can be used as a tool in Chapter 5. Specifically, the following idea is developed – documentation can be used as a means to extend the absence of a temporary artwork, rather than fill in for it.

was, through what is missing. The ‘carnality of absence’ is used to experience and acknowledge that the artwork is not present.[40]

[40] Fowles, 25.

Chapter 2

Tracing the History of Temporary Artworks

2.1 Introduction

The beginning of the twentieth century marks the shift away from the production of durable art objects, a further development of modernism and its questioning of the nature of art which had already begun during the previous century.[1] The exploration of the object of art, the art object, and how art is experienced have been recurring themes in art practices spanning from the twentieth century, as shall be made evident, presenting a clear ontological shift in how we define and understand artworks, which continues to be present in artworks produced in the present day, most notably in temporary artworks.

This chapter begins to address the rich and complex historical pedigree from which temporary artworks have sprung and which they pay homage to. They are a continuation of earlier creative trajectories in the canons of art history, as will be set out here, but stand apart in that they, as artworks, in spite of their conceptual nature, through their material unmaking return a certain amount of focus and attention onto their physical objecthood. In doing so, temporary artworks are both performative and performing artworks – a concept discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 – as they consist of a material component which is

[1] Jennifer Mundy, *Lost Art* (London: Tate Publishing, 2013), 14.

critical in shaping the experience of temporary artworks, which cannot last as the material object is intentionally physically unmade. The category of temporary artworks is needed, as discussed in Chapter 1, because the broader category of ephemeral artworks is insufficient. Temporary artworks are defined by specific constraints, namely: they are physical works of an intentional temporary duration that are created only once. Temporary artworks consist of a materialised object, but also extend to something beyond their material manifestation – their performance of loss, which persists after the material object is unmade.[2]

This chapter will provide an approximate timeline of artistic movements which have contributed to the lineage of temporary artworks, thereby clarifying a canon of practice and a historical context which has developed into the contemporary practice of creating temporary artworks. The artworks and movements discussed are not an exhaustive historical timeline, but rather those which have had a direct impact on temporary artworks and can be considered part of their lineage. The movements and specific works discussed are of canonical importance, shaping the change and range of material possibilities present through a shift in creative practice in the twentieth century. The works noted are exemplary of the developing ideas around what constitutes an artwork, the object of art and the art object, as well was the waning and waxing interest in material and objects. The purpose is to contextualize where temporary artworks originate, making apparent the legacy they owe to previous art movements, and to clarify where temporary artworks diverge and become a category unto themselves.

The argument presented, namely that temporary artworks have come forth from the early *avant-garde* and following artistic movements unfolds by discussing the changing object of art and importance of the material art object stemming from the twentieth century, specifically delving into the critical historical forebears, with special attention paid to the concept of the dematerialization of the object of art, after which, material unmaking is discussed – the process through which the initial material aspect of temporary artworks become physically finite, which is compared and contrasted to the dematerialization of the object of art. From this discussion it becomes clear that temporary artworks are a continuation of artistic themes and practices present throughout the twentieth century, but also stand apart as a category of artworks unto themselves.

[2] This is discussed in Chapter 5.

2.2 Changing the object of art

Temporary artworks have evolved from the legacy of the modern artworks of the twentieth century.[3] This points to a time where pivotal changes were taking place in art practices, laying the foundations for the framework of temporary artworks.[4] Notably, these shifts often came as a response to a socio-political context. Art practices do not exist in a vacuum, but rather respond to the context and times in which they occur.

The canons of artworks made in the twentieth century proved increasingly unstable due to the inclusion of ephemeral materials such as photographs and cardboard, works reliant on the human body and performers, auto-destructive art, edible and rotting works, installations based in nature left to face the elements and respond accordingly, and objects constructed from newly developed materials, such as plastics. Artworks stemming from this period were inevitably physically vulnerable due to their structural properties and unconventional material. A new vocabulary of material with an appropriate methodology for care needed to be developed for collecting and conserving practices, in order to handle the new diverse language of art material of the twentieth century onwards. What's more, material began to reflect not only the time in which it was made, but also diverse intentions which could not be read from the physical artwork alone.

As such, the twentieth century represents the beginnings of what is now a relatively young history of durational ambiguity in Western art. This ambiguity, which stems from the unclear longevity of new artworks, arose from the introduction of novel plastics and organic materials, as well offbeat ways of using known materials, such as in mixed media installations. The landscape of material use and possibility in art was diversified and opened, starting with the inclusion of found objects in Dada as well as collage and cardboard by other vanguard movements. The body also became more significant, with artworks taking on a performative nature. As it is used here, performative refers to an artistic expression that constitutes the performance of a specified act by virtue of its form and presentation.[5] The diversification of art served as an exploration of how to shape, and what to present, as art, and challenging traditional and established views.

In exploring how to use new materials, artists were more interested in what artist

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[3] As is discussed in greater detail in 3.1.1 Changes in Creative Practice in the twentieth century.

[4] Though the creation of making ephemeral artworks has its roots much further back than Dada, the temporary artwork as defined in this thesis finds its roots foremost in art practices of the twentieth century. This is furthermore supported by Salvatore Lorusso et al., who discuss the rise of ephemeral art as largely forming in the twentieth century, subdividing it into: performances, happenings, installations or land art, computer art or net art, eat art, and kinetic art. Salvatore Lorusso et al., 'The Traditional, The Innovative, The Ephemeral: Conception, realization, intervention in contemporary art', *Conservation Science in Cultural Heritage*, [S.l.], v. 9, (Mar. 2009,): 170-214, 176.

[5] A deeper discussion of performance and performativity follows in Chapter 5.

and critic Robert Storr refers to as an ‘immediacy’ than in thinking about the durability of their work. [6] This immediacy was often achieved through focusing on the present moment and experimenting with process. As Storr elaborates:

> Freshness of ideas or procedural attitudes often results in the premature physical deterioration of the object that embodies those ideas and attitudes. The creative misuse of traditional materials is an inescapable necessity for many artists, as is the experimentation with novel or untested materials.[7]

The most interesting and important questions relating to the development of temporary artworks are the early questions asked in the twentieth century around the object of art, and the role of the art object within the artwork, together with this interest in immediacy. As such, the timeline of twentieth century art presented and discussed here considers the most critical movements which contributed to reconsidering the objective of the art object and the creation of experience-driven art, starting with what are discussed as the historical forebears of temporary art, looking at the development of the dematerialization of art and from this exploring the point and period at which we begin to see what this research describes as ‘material unmaking’ – a critical aspect which defines temporary artworks.

2.2.1 Historical forebears

Out of the First World War, and as a response to nationalism, Dada was born at the Cabaret Voltaire at the hands of German artist, poet and writer Hugo Ball (b. 1886 - 1927) in Zurich in 1916. There are different stories as to where the name Dada is rooted, including that it is French for ‘hobby horse’ or that it is garbled baby talk and means nothing. [8] Indeed, the Dada manifesto contains, among others, the following two statements: ‘The magic of a word – Dada – which has brought journalists to the gates of a world unforeseen, is of no importance to us.’[9] and ‘Dada Means Nothing.’[10]

The Dada movement, which often described itself as anti-art, was one of the first conceptual art movements to shift its attention from creating aesthetic objects to disrupting bourgeois values and critiquing society, the role of the artist, and indeed the role of art.[11]

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[6] Robert Storr, ‘Immortalité Provisoire’, *Mortality Immortality?: The Legacy of 20th-Century Art*, ed. Miguel Angel Corzo (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 1999), 35.

[7] Ibid.

[8] sort reference

[9] Tristan Tzara, “Dada Manifesto 1918”.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Anti-art, a term coined by French artist Marcel Duchamp, specifically concerned itself with rejecting the prevalent definitions of art and conformity, instead those aligned with movement created works existing outside traditional modes of artistic practice, opposing high art and the art market itself.

Subversion of the traditional art world was explored by the Dadaists as a strategy and theme through visual art including the revolutionary beginnings of collage and photomontage as fine art, but also music, dance, poetry and performance. Rather than uniting through a mode of practices, Dada was propelled and unified by an attitude. French-German artist Jean Arp (b. 1886 - 1966), discussed this attitude and *modus operandi* as a desire to 'to destroy the hoaxes of reason and to discover an unreasoned order'.[12] The Dada artists were thus united in their attitude and shared ideals of changing society and art. Quickly, Dada spread across the rest of Western Europe including gaining foothold in Berlin and Paris and reaching as far as New York.

Dada values were encapsulated in works such as French artist Marcel Duchamp's (b. 1887 - 1968) infamous *Fountain* (1917) which has become an icon of twentieth century art. Duchamp purchased an ordinary urinal, which he signed as 'R. Mutt', and submitted as an artwork for the inaugural exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists, which the artist had helped found.[13] Notably, Duchamp did not submit the work under his own name. The Society's constitution stipulated that all members' submissions had to be accepted. However, the Society's board of directors had a discussion and decided on a vote when confronted with *Fountain*. On the basis of this vote, *Fountain* was rejected from the exhibition, as the board decided that the sanitary ware was both obscene and did not constitute an artwork. Duchamp publicly protested the exclusion of *Fountain* and resigned from the Society.

Fountain (1917) is exemplary of what Duchamp called his Readymades. Readymades were so-called found objects, ordinarily manufactured, and appropriated by the artist as artworks. As such, the Readymade illustrates the authorial power of the artist to create an artwork through framing and context. The artist's idea was thus crowned over his or her craft and the physical object. As Duchamp stated: 'I was interested in ideas—not merely in visual products.'[14] Through *Fountain* (1917) Duchamp radically removed the significance of the artist's hand, underscoring the artist's mind instead. As Duchamp explained, 'An ordinary object [could be] elevated to the dignity of a work of art by the mere choice of an artist.'[15] As such the role of the artist was challenged and changed, and along with this our understanding of how to make and what could be considered art.

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[12] William Rubin, *Dada, Surrealism, and Their Heritage* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1968), 12.

[13] William A. Camfield, 'Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*: Its History and Aesthetics in the Context of 1917', *Dada/Surrealism* 16 (1987), 64-94.

[14] Duchamp as quoted in 'Eleven Europeans in America,' James Johnson Sweeney (ed.), *The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* (New York), vol. 13, no. 4/5, 1946, 20.

[15] Ibid.

Alongside Duchamp, fellow Dada artists such as Swiss artist Sophie Taeuber-Arp (b. 1889 - 1943), continued to challenge notions of how to make, present and think of art, through a diverse range and combination of art practices. For instance, alongside painting and sculpting, Taeuber-Arp also worked as a choreographer, puppeteer and a dancer. This wide range of artistic modes of practice was common within the movement and also present in the range of practices of other key Dada participants, including Taeuber-Arp's husband, the German-French artist Jean Arp, who worked as a sculptor, painter, poet, and abstract multi-media artist, German artist Hans Richter (b. 1888 - 1976), who worked as a graphic artist, and experimented with and produced film, German artist Max Ernst (b. 1891 - 1976), who was a painter, sculptor, graphic artist, and poet, German artist Hannah Höch (b. 1889 - 1978), who worked with collage and photomontage, German artist Kurt Schwitters (b. 1887 - 1948), who worked as a painter, sculptor, typographer and writer and revolutionized the use and acceptance of collage in fine art, American artist Man Ray (b. 1890 – 1976), who painted, created installations and film, and Romanian artist Tristan Tzara, pseudonym for Sami Rosenstock, (b. 1896 - 1963), who worked as a poet, essayist and performance artist. Together these artists challenged, diversified, and promoted new means of making artworks, and our understanding of the role of artists and indeed women in art. Notably, Hannah Höch alongside pioneering photomontage techniques also challenged prevalent ideas around the role and status of women in society.

The Dada movement began to fracture by the 1920s, but many of the artists involved continued to produce works and helped shape and inspire offshoot movements including Surrealism and Cubism.[16] Although, Dada was short-lived, its impact continued to reverberate well throughout the twentieth century and still marks a pivotal turning point in art practice and art history today. Dada's legacy, and notably Duchamp's principle that art is primarily shaped and defined by the artist's idea, and not the artist's hand, is still evident in contemporary modes of artistic practice.[17]

From Dada onwards we can trace an open mentality toward restructuring and challenging the concept of the artwork, and coupled with this, the use of unconventional materials, as well as a blurring between performance and art object. From the Readymade onwards, we could, as described by Foster:

> leap past old aesthetic questions of craft, medium, and taste ("is it good or bad painting or sculpture?") to new questions that were potentially ontological ("what

[16] John G. Frey, 'From Dada to Surrealism', *Parnassus*, Vol. 8, No. 7 (Dec., 1936): 12-15.

[17] Michael Petry, *The art of not making: the new artist/artisan relationship*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2011), 8.

is art?"), epistemological ("how do we know it?"), and institutional ("who determines it?").[18]

Many of the processes and techniques which are associated with contemporary art, including performance, photomontage, multimedia, and audience provocation originate from Dada.[19] Even as Dada dwindled, its impact and significance were channelled into new offshoot styles, movements, and groups; those which belong to the lineage of temporary artworks will be discussed.

Surrealism is one of the following movements which evolved from Dada. Many Dadaist artists were absorbed into the Surrealist movement, notably in Paris by the mid-1920s, continuing an emphasized interest in everyday objects, process over product, and comparable to Dada, covered a broad scope of practice including visual arts, film, music and literature. However, it should be noted that Surrealism was a far less political movement than Dada. Instead, as encapsulated by one of Surrealism's figureheads, the French writer and poet, and former Dadaist, André Breton (b. 1896 - 1966), Surrealism was 'thought expressed in the absence of any control exerted by reason, and outside all moral and aesthetic considerations.'[20]

Following from Duchamp's Readymades, Surrealism continued to use everyday objects to construct artworks. These included continued use of found objects, which is to say the use of an existing object, manufactured or of natural origin, as a raw material in an *assemblage* often aiming to create a kind of juxtaposition. This new form of art practice is clearly illustrated through artworks such as Meret Oppenheim's *Object* (1936). *Object* (1936) consists of a fur-covered cup, saucer, and spoon. The artwork was allegedly inspired by a conversation at a café between Oppenheim with fellow artists Pablo Picasso and Dora Maar. Picasso, upon admiring Oppenheim's fur-covered bracelet, remarked that one could cover anything with fur. Oppenheim retorted: 'Even this cup and saucer?'.[21] These types of works continued to play with the playful and provocative rhetoric set up by the earlier Dadaists.

The everyday continued to be a source of raw material and interest in the 1940s, including the notion of chance and immediacy, as encapsulated in avant-garde practices of this time, such as American artist John Cage's (b. 1912 - 1992) oeuvre. Cage practiced as a

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[18] Hal Foster, *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism and Postmodernism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 128.

[19] Cabell Smith, 'A Century Later, Dada Gets Its Due', *Duke Today*, December 10, 2004, https://today.duke.edu/2004/12/dada_1204.html, (accessed August 16, 2015).

[20] André Breton, *Le Manifeste du Surréalisme*, 1924

[21] Mary Ann Caws, 'Meret Oppenheim's *Fur Teacup*', *Gastronomica*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Fall 2011): 25-28, 25.

musical theorist, composer, writer, and artist, creating experimental works which reconsidered the formulation between material, structure, method and form. During the 1940s, Cage met Duchamp, which would inevitably prove to be an influential relationship. Duchamp asked Cage to write music for part of Hans Richter's film *Dreams that Money Can Buy* (1946) and the two developed a friendship. Art historian David Hopkins has argued that it was Cage who was one of the prime movers of Duchamp's ideas into America, and as such helped further spread the influence and legacy of Dada.[22] Cage discussed his interest in Duchamp as caused by Duchamp's 'subversion of causality and psychological depth, coupled with his predilection for chance operations and his larger refusal to distinguish between "life" and "art"…'[23] This theoretical turn towards the everyday, surprise, immediacy and the interconnectedness between life and art originating from Dada practice, also found its way into Cage's practice and approach. In turn Cage's practice continued to inspire both immediate and future artists.

Immediacy, process, and change continued to present themselves as running themes in practices such as American artist Jackson Pollock's (b. 1912 - 1956) action-painting starting in the 1940s and continuing well into the 1950s. Action painting was an artistic process in which the artist spontaneously splashed, dripped, and smeared paint across a canvas, thereby emphasizing the act of painting over the actual final product.

Neo-Dada arose post Dada in the 1950s as a movement which used audio, visual and literary manifestations with a similar intent to the earlier Dada, including an interest in using found objects. Exemplary artists include the American artists Jasper Johns (b. 1930), Robert Rauschenberg (b. 1925 - 2008), and Allan Kaprow (b. 1927 - 2006), all three of which were involved with the infamous Black Mountain College, an experimental communal college which positioned itself as a countercultural center and where Cage, among others, taught.[24]

Kaprow, who was a former student of, and also influenced by, Cage, pioneered concepts within performance art and established the practice of creating Happenings in the late 1950s. A Happening was a performance in which an event or situation, often something rather commonplace, and riffing on the idea of change encounters, could be framed as an artwork.[25] The Happenings disappeared after they were performed, only

[22] David Hopkins, *After modern art, 1945-2000*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 41.

[23] Marjorie Perloff and Charles Junkerman, *John Cage: Composed in America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 10.1

[24] Mildred C. Glimcher, *Happenings: New York, 1958*-1963, (New York: The Monacelli Press LCC, 2012), 13

[25] Glimcher, 11.

really understood by those who had experienced them and passed down through time as memory slowly becoming myth.[26]As Kaprow said of his happenings later on:

> Events were simply dissolved into the air, as all events are. And the best one could have about those events was a memory, distorted perhaps, but a memory. So, it occurred to us, that the way that we may go about this was not to have a show in the conventional sense, since there's nothing to show, but to have a yearlong of retrospections. Which might mean, and it turned out this way, that I would invent my career. And that's the way it would be interesting to me. [27]

The Happenings thus continued to play with the idea of framing the everyday and transforming it into art through the artist's gaze and contextualization.

Despite the seeming spontaneity, Kaprow's Happenings were in fact often highly orchestrated.[28] The audience members, which were simultaneously also the participants, received invitations with a location, date, and time. Upon arrival, the audience/participants were given a program of events, instructions explaining how they were to behave, where to sit, and when to applaud. The Neo-Dadaists, such as Kaprow, continued to work outside the realm of traditional aesthetics that Dada first broke free from, and instead played with contradictions and brought together different media and contexts to encourage critical thinking about the boundaries present in the art world, such as where art begins and ends. As a part of this, art practices developed and moved outside of the confines of the museum and gallery and into the landscape of the everyday. This further emphasized a changed approach and reprioritization of what was considered art and art's very purpose.

As this inquisitive line of practice continued, creative work began to approach what French artist Yves Klein (b. 1928 - 1962) deemed 'The evolution of art towards the immaterial' where the artwork gradually and radically became less tied to its material form, and more driven by ideas. [29] This allowed for new ideas of performance and the artwork as spectacle, as was evident in some of Klein's own works of the time, including *Le Vide* (1958) [or The Void], in which Klein emptied a gallery space and painted it white, creating a performance spectacle around the hype of the opening night. [30] The invitation to the opening read:

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[26]Ibid.

[27] Noted in an interview conducted by John Held Jr, *Dallas Public Library Cable Access Studio* 1988, http://www.ubu.com/papers/kaprow_held_interview.html, (accessed July 4, 2015).

[28] Jenelle Porter, 'Dance with Camera: A Curator's POV', *The Oxhord Handbook of Screendance* Studies, Douglas Rosenberg, ed, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 25.

[29] Yves Klein, 'The Evolution of Art towards the Immaterial', [1959] *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood (Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 818.

[30] Known in full as *La spécialisation de la sensibilité à l'état matière première en sensibilité picturale stabilisée* (*The Specialization of Sensibility in the Raw Material State of Stabilized Pictorial Sensibility).*

> Iris Clert invites you to honor, with all your affective presence, the lucid and positive advent of a certain reign of the sensitive. This manifestation of perceptive synthesis confirms Yves Klein's pictorial quest for an ecstatic and immediately communicable emotion.[31]

This work enacted a combination of the artist's interests: 'iconoclasm, ritual, mysticism and provocation.'[32] Through *Le Vide* (1958), Klein played and upended the art audience's expectation of what they would be shown, creating the ritual of the art opening with the ceremonial invitation, only to present the audience with emptiness and space, thus framing, and confronting the audience with their expectation. *Le Vide* (1958) was a performance of the museum opening ritual.

The medium of performance continued to be explored by movements, including the Fluxus group of the 1960s and 1970s, which continued to explore the Dada concept of anti-art and staged performances. Critical figures within this movement included its founder, the Lithuanian-born American artist George Maciunas (b. 1931 - 1978), the German artist Jospeh Beuys (b. 1921 - 1986), and Korean-born American artist Nam June Paik (b. 1932 - 2006). As a group they were not unified in the media they used, but rather, like all of the avant-garde movements discussed, in their ideals, namely to make art directly accessible to the masses and to produce all the time and in the everyday. Beuys went as far as to state that everyone is an artist, with which he argued for the idea that all human creativity results into a kind of 'social sculpture'.[33] The concept of social sculpture alluded to the idea that human activity could structure and shape society and environment, with the potential to bring about revolutionary change. It highlighted an interest in the relationship between life and art, and the idea that they are indistinguishable. As such the Fluxists created many works outside the gallery and museum structure and many of which were difficult if not impossible to commodify or conserve through traditional means.

The significance of all of these creative inquiries lies in the implied questioning of the behaviour and practices of institutions, escaping what Carol Duncan deemed 'the sacred space of the museum' or indeed what Arthur Danto referred to as 'the artworld' – the framework of the stakeholders and context that make up the art industry.[34] Artists

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[31] Yves Klein, 'Le Vide Performance (The Void)', *Yves Klein 1928-1962: A Retrospective*, (Houston: The Arts Publisher, Inc, Rice University, 1982).

[32] Museum Haus Lange "Intervention Yves Klein – Le Vide", http://www.kunstmuseenkrefeld.de/e/ausstellungen/ausstellung/hl20090920.html, accessed 29/01/14.

[33] Caroline Tisdall, *Art into Society, Society into Art* (London: ICA, 1974), 8.

[34] Carol Duncan, 'Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship', *Exhibiting Cultures: the poetics and politics of museum display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); The term 'artworld' is applied as coined by Danto in his seminal essay 'The Artworld' in 1964. Arthur C. Danto, 'The Artworld', *The Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 61, Issue 19, American Philosophical Association Eastern Division Sixty-First Meeting (Oct. 15, 1964): 571-584.

began to examine how these institutions interacted with their practice, exploring themes of inclusion/exclusion and continued to question the object of art, and the nature of the artwork itself. This led to the development of the practice of institutional critique – the critical and creative inquiry into the structures which housed art, such as galleries and museums, and a further questioning of the social function and concept of art.

Starting in the late 1960s, institutional critique further questioned the power structures and ideologies around art that the early avant-garde movements of the twentieth century had found problematic. Key artists participating in this movement included Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers (b. 1924 - 1976), French artist Daniel Buren (b. 1938), and German artist Hans Haacke (b. 1936). These artists sought to challenge both the circulation of art and what was considered art in the first place. Through critically reflecting upon how art was shown, and what was selected and recognized as art in the first place, the social function and role of art in general was analyzed. It was a practice conducted by artists against art institutions.[35] The focus was again, in a very Duchampian manner, not on the art object, or material, but rather on the framing of art and an investigation into the political, institutional, and social context, playing upon traditional expectations and upending them.

2.2.2 Dematerialization

The creative act of questioning the artwork as material object was pushed to its furthest extreme by the historical development of what Lucy Lippard and David Chandler discussed as the dematerialization of art, notably focussing on artworks produced between 1966 and 1972.[36] The term 'dematerialization', as noted in the introduction, originates from critical theorist Lucy Lippard, who coined it together with critic John Chandler in their seminal essay 'The Dematerialization of Art'.[37] Lippard and Chandler used the term to discuss the shift in importance from art material and object to an artwork's idea, changing the course of art production to an art of not making. In their essay, Chandler and Lippard explored the historical development of dematerialization, to be understood as 'the object becoming wholly obsolete' in the wake of ultra-conceptual art.[38] There was an

[35] Simon Sheikh, 'Notes on Institutional Critique', *European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies*, http://eipcp.net/transversal/0106/sheikh/en/print, (accessed August 6, 2015).

[36] Lucy Lippard & John Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art" [1968] in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Alexander Alberro & Blake Stimson (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1999), 46.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid. 46.

artistic shift in which the object can be said to have been lowered to the status of a mere by-product.[39] As critically noted by Lippard and Chandler: 'When works of art, like words, are signs that convey ideas, they are not things in themselves but symbols or representatives of things. Such a work is a medium rather than an end in itself or "art-as-art."'[40] The dematerialized artwork, in short, was conceived as more than a physical artefact, but rather an overarching concept. The 1960s saw a further establishment of ephemeral art production, where artists 'demonstrated a diminishing interest in the longevity of artefacts, entrusting the artistic message to the idea.'[41]

Notably, although this creative questioning is pronounced within the mid 1960s, it finds its historical forebears with the Dada movement and Duchamp's Readymades. The dematerialization of the art object is a continuation of institutional critique and an overarching thematic characterization of movements such as conceptual art, process art, *arte povera* and land art, which will now be discussed in more detail.

Conceptual art, as it emerged as a fully-fledged movement in the 1960s, tried to free the artwork from its representational and most importantly physical chains. Art historian, critic, and artist Robert Morgan noted:

> One may aspire to understand Conceptual Art – at its best – as a necessary statement capable of articulating forceful ideas in a world where invisible systems seem to prevail.[42]

As such, conceptual art continued to reject the importance of the art object and traditional aesthetics in favour of the artist's idea and trying to find new and creative ways to engage audiences and to create interactions above material works.

Audience interactions were encouraged to think about power structures through cerebral works such as Marcel Broodthaers' *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* (Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles), a traveling museum which the artist ran between 1969 and 1972. The museum was in fact a conceptual museum, without a permanent location or collection. The artist wrote of the work: 'This museum is a fiction. In one moment it plays the role of a political parody of artistic events, in another that of an artistic parody of political events.'[43] Through this fictitious museum, Broodthaers explored

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[39] Ibid.

[40]Ibid, 49.

[41] Ibid.,

[42] Robert C. Morgan, *Conceptual Art: An American Perspective. (*London: McFarland & Company, c1994), 128.

[43] Rachel Haidu, *The Absence of Work: Marcel Broodthaers 1964 - 1976*, (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2010), 201.

the formal construct and reality of the museum, miming institutional conventions and approach. For instance, during 1969, Broodthaers stationed the conceptual museum on a beach on the Belgian coast. The museum structure was delineated by lines drawn in the sand. The outline of the museum was accompanied with a series of handwritten signs, placed in the sand, stating '*Défense absolue de toucher aux objets*' (strictly forbidden to touch the objects), and 'Musée/Museum'. The museum outlines weathered and eventually disappeared through their interaction with wind and water. This iteration of *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* has been captured by a single photograph, which portrays the lines, signs, but no people. With this fictional museum, Broodthaers mocked the literal and conceptual structure of the museum, critiquing the social power and interaction taking place in the institutionalized art world.

Plays on presentation also came in the form of process art, which focused on the means of production of art often framing material and what happened to the material as a result of the artist's interaction with it. Examples include American artist Richard Serra's (b. 1939) series of *Splash* pieces executed between 1968 to 1970. These were pieces in which the artist both splashed and cast molten led into the junctures between floor and wall.

Arte Povera emerged during the same period, echoing this same interest in process alongside an outright rejection of industrial technology. It represented a continued critique of the art market, creating works that were often not durable due to their construction and/or material selection. The movement focussed on the use of so-called unprocessed 'poor' materials such as foodstuffs, earth, rocks, clothing, paper and rope from which they constructed installations.

The theme of using what was at hand and creating works outside the traditional art market, gallery, and museum was further pushed by the emergence of land art in the 1960s, also referred to as earthworks by American artist Robert Smithson (b. 1938 - 1973). Land art consisted of work produced in the outdoors, using organic materials found in nature, to produce structures and interventions, connecting the artwork to the landscape and context in which it was produced and displayed. With the help of Richard Serra, Smithson created his iconic work *Spiral Jetty* (1970) using mud, salt crystals, and basalt rocks, in order to construct 460 m long and 4.6 m wide counterclockwise coil jutting from the shore of the Great Salt Lake in Utah, USA. The strong narrative between land artworks and their environment introduced the concept of site-specificity, where works were created to be displayed and experienced in a specific locale.

Within the 1960s movements, and notably their focus on presence, experience, and creating works which could not endure and were difficult to commodify arose some of the

first artworks which clearly fit into the framework of temporary artworks: physical works of an intentional limited duration, created only once. The themes present in movements of this time enabled artists to create works without focussing on, and sometimes even consciously opposing, the creation of a stable, fixed, and permanent artwork. Examples of early temporary artworks can, for instance, be found in the practice of the Bulgarian-born and French-born American artist duo Christo (b. 1935) and Jeanne-Claude (b. 1935 - 2009).

Christo and Jeanne-Claude, whose work lies somewhere between land art and urban art and whose practice is invariably submerged in institutional critique, started working on their monumental projects in the 1960s and are still creating temporary artworks today.[44] Notably the duo has not officially affiliated or aligned their practice to any particular movement. The duo's works consist of large completely temporary installations, often outdoors, such as their wrapping of the Pont-Neuf bridge in Paris in 1985. The physical installation, which cannot last, creates an 'enigmatic relationship' which plays upon 'the work's actuality and its sublimity'.[45] Christo and Jeanne-Claude's installations are concepts and interactions made fleetingly tangible. They discuss their installations as having to be experienced in real-time and *in situ*. The installations are self-funded by the artists, who create documentation, including video, models, drawings and collage which are what is left to both remember and record the work, as well as produce smaller saleable works such as drawings and collages of the pending larger installations, which help pay for the actualization of the large-scale installations. Notably, the drawings and collages are sold as artworks in their own right.

Some have argued, like art historian Michael Kirby, that conceptual art is over.[46] However, its legacy and the debate it has fuelled about the relevance of the role of an artwork's material is still very much present in current artistic discourse, including the practice of creating temporary artworks. Likewise, the works of other movements which emerged alongside conceptual art have continued to present themselves as inspirational red threads through current temporary art practice. The interest in questions surrounding what constitutes an artwork, using material to uncover, frame and present experience continues and stems from the works produced and ideologies that ran parallel across the twentieth

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[44] Credit was given to "Christo" only, until 1994, when the outdoor works and large indoor installations were retroactively credited to "Christo and Jeanne-Claude".[1] Jeanne-Claude passed away November 18, 2009, and as such Christo now works alone, although credits Jeanne-Claude to all current projects..

[45] Charles Garoian, Roy Quan and Dan Collins, 'Christo: On Art, Education, and the Running Fence", *Art Education* Vol. 30, No. 2 (Feb., 1977): 16-19, 19.

[46] Michael Kirby, "Foreword" in *Conceptual Art: An American Perspective.* Robert C. Morgan, author, (London : McFarland & Company, c1994), xi.

century.

In the wake of the dematerialization of art, further explorations into the relationship between art and objecthood have continued. The following section will discuss how the process of material unmaking has developed in the 1980s and with this where we can trace a more general tendency to creating temporary artworks.[47]

2.2.3 Material unmaking

After the dematerialization of the art object of the 1960s and 70s, there is a kind of rematerialization of the art object in the 1980s. This rematerialization, or renewed interest in art objects, alongside the continued interest in creating experiences, is developed by art movements such as the Young British Artists (YBAs). The YBAs like most of the art movements discussed in this chapter, do not comprise of a group of artists exploring the exact same media or mode of practice, but rather are united in the time in which they were producing art and the goals they were trying to accomplish. The group included painters, sculptors, installation, and video artists who had all studied Fine Art together at London's Goldsmith's College and were shown together at the *Freeze* art exhibition in 1988. Their works were confrontational, often resorting to shock tactics, the use of perishable and throwaway materials, and the artists courted both controversy in their works as well as an entrepreneurial attitude for exhibiting and selling it. Notorious leading artists included English artist Damien Hirst (b. 1965) and English artist Tracey Emin (b. 1963). Scottish artist Anya Gallaccio, whose work illustrates the problematics of temporary artworks, and opens this thesis, is also one of the YBAs.

Hopkins notes that for many commentators of the time, the YBAs seemed to be rehashing the tropes of the likes of Dada, Fluxus, and *Arte Povera*.[48] However, as critic John Roberts argued, and Hopkins supports, as do I, the YBAs presented a response to the high intellectualism and elitism of critical postmodernism[49]. The YBAs made a conscious attempt to ride themselves of art theory, rejecting any notion of seriousness and trying to remove art from its high brow pedestal.[50] These aims of course invariably echoed the early

[47] Note that it is not argued that no temporary artworks were made before the 1980s, but that the framework of questions and practices leading up to 1980s results into a prolific number of temporary artworks being created. As such, temporary artworks could be considered to more or less originate as a more common practice in the 1980s, but bear a clear legacy of the developments of artistic practice from the beginning of the twentieth century.

[48] Hopkins, 239.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Elizabeth Legge, 'Reinventing Derivation: Roles, Stereotypes, and "Young British Art"', *Representations*, No. 71 (Summer, 2000): 1-23.

Dadaists.

However, unlike early avant-garde movements, the YBAs consciously courted the art market, despite producing works which were not only provocative, but also often difficult to conserve. In doing so, they found a new way of re-examining the role of objecthood of the artwork and its place in the art market. Using materials that were difficult to preserve, and structuring the artwork's narrative around material instability, certain works by the YBAs, such as Gallaccio's *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996) invited and made use of material unmaking as a framework of their art practice. Though the work of the YBAs challenged the art market, arguably this practice can be seen as an inquiry into both the nature of objects and what is saleable, as opposed to actively working against the marketability of their work. The YBAs were pushing against boundaries, trying to stretch them, not wholly subverting them, as they did engage with and sell artworks and objects.

This exploration of creating evocative experience through material unmaking has continued throughout the 1990s and noughties, with many of the artists who created some of the first temporary artworks still practicing today. Moreover, an increased inward turn to objects and things has taken place towards the end of the twentieth century and continued into the twenty first century. It is what Severin Fowles refers to as a kind of 'new materialism'.[51] Paired with this returned interest in the physical and in objects, we have arrived at what Fowles discusses as 'the carnality of absence'.[52] Absences have physical consequences and resonances. As he elaborates,

> When absences become object-like, when they seem to exist not merely as an afterthought of perception but rather as self-standing presences out there in the world, they begin to acquire powers and potentialities similar to things.[53]

This points to the crucial notion that one can experience absence as much as one can experience an object. As such this proposes that negative space speaks as loudly as, if not louder than, the space filled by material. In relation to temporary artworks, this presents the interesting idea that these types of works are first experienced in their material presence, and as they are physically unmade, can also be experienced in their absence. The process of material unmaking brings to light the work's impending physical absence, and the later physically absent object continues to echo that there was once something physical that did not last. The significant role of experience is discussed at greater length in Chapter 4.

Within temporary artworks, the manner in which a work's material unfolds and is

[51] Severin Fowles, "People without things", *The Anthropology of Absence: Materialisations of Transcendence and Loss*, edited by Mikkel Bille, Frida Hastrup, and Tim Flohr Sørensen, (Springer Press, New York, 2010): 23-41, 25.

[52] Ibid, 26.

[53] Ibid, 27.

eventually undone is critical to its meaning. This sets temporary artworks apart from conceptual works. Material unmaking – the process of undoing physical structure and eradicating the art object – represents both a mutation of dematerialization and the returned interest in objects. Material, object, and process are highlighted. The concept is not fetishized above the physical work. Temporary artworks rather than completely move away from the object and focus on the idea, as conceptual artworks do, address the importance of experience, presence and absence and situate this around a transient object.

As such, temporary artworks such as Anya Gallaccio's *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996), Anna Schuleit's *Bloom* (2003) and Tawny Kerr's *Lemon Chandelier* (2012) speak through their physical objecthood, its limited presence, and continue to linger in their absence. The poetics of the irretrievable material structures lies in the material object that is lost. In doing so, these artists reframe the position of the material object and readdress its importance in shaping experience.

Temporary artworks have taken the stage and continued to develop conceptual art's legacy, reviving questions around the material object, but finding new ways to draw attention and engage with them, e.g. through material unmaking. The impermanence of the material object, and that it cannot be remade, shapes an experience and presence and later absence, and creates a tension which makes the work more precious. As the artist duo Christo and Jeanne-Claude note, 'non-permanent art will be missed'.[54] Temporary artworks are shaped by their loss.

2.3 Conclusion

As this chapter demonstrates, temporary artworks have a rich and complex historical pedigree indebted to changes which took place in the canon of art practice of the twentieth century. The twentieth century marks a shift in materials and also a move away from the art object, instead becoming more concerned with the framework of art. By the end of the twentieth century, the art produced existed in a pluralistic form, and has continued to do so, with many artists continuing to create artworks in traditions and similar veins originating from the early vanguard movements such as Dada, which were further developed by the dematerialization of art, including in performance art, land art, and process art, and continued to echo earlier Dadaist themes. Towards the end of the twentieth century a renewed focus reframed the importance of material and art object as a gateway to shaping the experience of art, particularly for temporary artworks. As Martha Buskirk recapitulates,

[54] Ursula Kolmstetter, 'All Wrapped Up: Christo and Jeanne-Claude Conquer the Reichstag', *NUVO Newsweekly*, (July 27, 1995).

> The fracturing of materials, forms, and effects into increasingly separate elements means that none of these choices can be understood as simply given or customary. These multiple references to artistic traditions and a myriad of other sources remain individually evident even as they are also given a new unity in the context of the work that emerges from this process.[55]

Continued themes originating with Dada, but further spread across the movements and art practices of later times discussed here include a strong focus on immediacy, experience, and process, often through non-permanence, as well as a focus on the audience's role. All of these themes run as a red thread, not only through the lineage of temporary artworks, but are also present in the actual practice of creating temporary artworks.

Temporary artworks do not invent new themes within art or specifically new problems, but rather they capitalize on them through their temporary construction, highlighting and bringing to light a tension of presence and absence and underscoring the issue of endurance for anyone interested in caring for and experiencing these works after their material unmaking.

The reason temporary artworks deserve to be discussed as a category unto their own is the set of issues which they clearly underscore by presenting us with a category of artworks that contain a physical object, but only for a short period of time, and which can only be created once. They continue to address the questions raised by the early *avant-garde*, but further problematize the role of material and raise questions of the role of presence and absence. Through asking how to conserve a temporary artwork without the physical work so that future audiences may experience it, the leading question of this research, we come closer to considering what it means to experience an artwork which is not physically present. These points are further broken down and approached thematically in the chapters that follow, specifically through a discussion of the state of conservation today (Chapter 3), temporary art as experience (Chapter 4), the performance of loss (Chapter 5), and succinctly brought together in the final chapter (Chapter 6).

[55] Martha Buskirk, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (London: MIT, 2003), 158.

Chapter 3

Contemporary Conservation Contextualized

3.1 Introduction

In considering what it means to conserve an artwork, it is important to consider at which point the conservator's role is warranted, as their presence cannot be assumed. A conservator is called upon to prevent, halt, and repair damage to an artwork. In order to assess what treatments are appropriate, a conservator must be clear on what the work is that they are presented with. This brings us to the first two issues, namely, how to recognize a temporary artwork and when to involve a conservator. As such, this chapter will contextualize current conservation theory and illustrate the difficulties that go in hand with the diversification of contemporary art materials, artist's intent, the different stakeholder's voices, and conservation practice's approach to temporary artworks.

American artists Ann Hamilton (b. 1956) and Kathryn Clark's (b. 1944) collaborative work *palimpsest* (1989) is a perfect illustration of the problems that go hand in hand with the diversification and expansion of material possibility which are increasingly common in artworks from the twentieth century onwards.[1] *palimpsest* consists

[1] The use of lowercase within the title of the work is a conscious decision made by the artists.

of cabbages, live snails, and an electric oscillating fan in a steel and glass vitrine within a room covered in beeswax tablets, under which, encased in the wax, lies nearly illegible yellowed newsprint. The cabbages inevitably rot. The snails die. The fan gives out and needs to be replaced. As for the wax tablets, these begin to accumulate the debris brought in by the artwork's audience. Hamilton discusses the work as 'a meditation on memory, its loss and our finitude.'[2] These are common themes among temporary artworks, evoked in part by the material selected, and in part by how the material reacts. The work's material is vulnerable, and thus potentially also the work itself, depending on how important the original material is for *palimpsest* (1989). The work in its fullness is experience driven, focused on a kind of immediacy in its interaction with the audience. Indeed, Hamilton is known for creating ephemeral environments which catapult the audience into immersive experiences as they stand in the work and interact with it.

Figure 3-1 Ann Hamilton and Kathryn Clark, *palimpsest*, 1989, mixed media incl. cabbages, live snails, and an electric oscillating fan, New Museum, New York. Photo: Fred Scrutin. Image courtesy of the artists and New Museum, New York.

[2] Jonathan Padget, '*For Snails, The Slimelight Is Fleeting*', *The Washington Post* (December 22, 2005), http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/12/21/AR2005122102274.html, (accessed, March 7, 2015).

Figure 3-2 Ann Hamilton and Kathryn Clark, palimpsest, 1989, mixed media incl. cabbages, live snails, and an electric oscillating fan, New Museum, New York. Photo: Fred Scrutin. Image courtesy of the artists and New Museum, New York.

Figure 3-3 Ann Hamilton and Kathryn Clark, *palimpsest*, 1989, mixed media incl. cabbages, live snails, and an electric oscillating fan, New Museum, New York. Image courtesy of Carol Scott.

Despite the highly impermanent selection of materials that are bound to change and degrade quickly, *palimpsest* (1989) still exists. This is surprising due to the nature of the materials selected. From reading the work's construction, as well as the artists' statement about the work, one would initially assume that the work is indeed a temporary artwork. And yet it is not.

This chapter develops a framework for recognizing temporary artworks. This is important, because identifying and distinguishing temporary works from the likes of *palimpsest* (1989) is not straightforward. Parallel to this, contemporary conservation practice and theory is contextualized, establishing what current conservation practice does, and considering how temporary artworks fit into this framework, and how the ideas within conservation, notably how documentation is used and understood, can be further expanded, particularly in relation to how we think about material presence and absence.

Gatherings of artists, art historians, conservators, curators, and collectors have provided prominent platforms for an ongoing discussion in which the difficulties and possible solutions in preserving modern and contemporary artworks are examined. Critically, these multiple viewpoints are all included in the present discussion on how we might conserve challenging artworks such as temporary artworks. I have made an explicit decision to bring in multiple viewpoints in order to weigh the different considerations against each other and create a more rounded sense of the discussion at hand. This is to a certain extent a less sanitized approach, as it presents different and at times conflicting interests, but it is also realistic about the dynamic needs and different points of view that exist. My own position within this, as an art historian asking how we might conserve and present temporary artworks to future audiences, after they have been unmade, is in part to understand the different tensions which shape this discussion and from this to present some practical possibilities which promote a practice of good care.

The discussion in this chapter unfolds as follows: a brief history of contemporary conservation is given, followed by a clarification of how to recognize a temporary artwork, after which the artist's intent is discussed. All of the works discussed in this thesis have the potential to become temporary due to their material vulnerability, but on occasion, as with *palimpsest*, they are not temporary artworks. Clarifying the artist's intent is the only way to shed light on how the material is meant to function in the artwork. This includes understanding whether the material object is critical to a work's integrity, whether it should be allowed to age and change, or can instead be frozen in some way, or replaced entirely. From this follows a discussion on the significance of material selection and material unmaking. This leads the way into a discussion on contemporary conservation's approach to temporary artworks and the roles of various stakeholders, notably the role of the artist,

the conservator, the curator, the collector, and the audience. After which an evaluation is brought of documentation as a conservation method for temporary artworks. Documentation has become a necessary conservation tool. However, how we frame the document needs to change in relation to the temporary artwork. The document should not be used to substitute or replace the material of the temporary artwork. Rather documentation should contextualize the work while also clarifying its material absence, in order to reposition new, secondary experiences as different from the primary experience.

The artists and cases presented in this chapter, including Eva Hesse, Gustav Metzger, Damien Hirst's *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (1991), Kara Walker's *A Subtlety* (2014), Richard Wright's *No Title* (Wall Painting) (2009), and Dieter Roth's *Kleinen Inseln* (1968) are brought in to illustrate the artists' voices and ideas as well as evaluate the role of material and conservation methods which enable these works to continue in some form so that they can be presented to future audiences. As critical theorist Sherri Irvin notes in relation to deciding upon treatment for any contemporary artwork, 'only by looking carefully at particular, real works can we develop adequate theories of contemporary art and, indeed, of art in general.'[3] For each example in this chapter, the focus is on the work's theoretical framework, to postulate what practical options exist in order to propel the trajectory of these temporary artworks forward, even after they have physically ceased to exist.

3.2 A brief history of contemporary conservation

The field of formalised conservation developed over the course of the late nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century through the understanding that every art form required specialist knowledge and techniques to handle the artworks.[4] Major changes in how art is formed pose the need to reconsider what art is and very pragmatically, how this art can be conserved and shared with future audiences. In this section, we will be tracing a history of ideas around what it means to conserve.

The practice of conservation has undergone many changes since its inception. The primary consistency is that the conservator is expected to ensure an artwork's longevity.[5]

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[3] Sherri Irvin, 'The Artist's Sanction in Contemporary Art', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 63 (2005): 315-326.

[4] As corroborated by Francesca G. Bewer, *A Laboratory for Art: Harvard's Fogg Museum and the Emergence of Conservation in America, 1900-1950* (Cambridge, Ma: Yale University Press, 2010); Nicholas Stanlet-Price et al., *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage* (Los Angelos: Getty Conservation Institute, 1996).

[5] ICOM-CC Conservation: Who, What &Why Tool, 'treatment', (n.d.), http://www.icom-cc.org/330/about-icom-cc/what-is-conservation/conservation:-who,-what-amp;-why/#.VEExdt6KjR1,

Though it will become clear that the understanding of longevity and subsequently the theory and practice of conservation have changed dramatically. Historically, the practice of conservation served as a vehicle for assuring a continuation of an artwork's aesthetic form, according to the tastes of the time, and with an aversion to change.[6] This approach was heavily influenced by conservation theorist and art historian Cesare Brandi's Theory of Restoration, written in the 1940s and 1950s, which emphasised the importance of restoration through a historical approach.[7] Brandi balanced the idea of the artwork as an important historic document alongside its aesthetic impact.[8] He specifically emphasized the importance of 'image', positing that the visual appearance of a work should remain constant and unaltered, as it constitutes the work's essence.[9] This emphasis on the visual whole is perhaps what causes conservator Glenn Wharton to refer to Brandi as taking an aesthetic approach.[10]

Furthermore, artworks were adapted to adhere to romantic notions of age, or patina as Brandi referred to it, which included the practice of coating paintings with thick yellow so-called 'gallery varnishes' to create 'the old master glow' and make the work appear more 'finished'.[11] It was believed that 'Time improved and mellowed paintings, increasing their beauty, harmony, subtlety and mystery.'[12] The notion was that Time was assisted by dubious coats of varnish. These alterations made by conservators were not publicly contested until 1844, when Charles Eastlake, Keeper of the National Gallery, requested that the conservation department remove the yellow tinted gallery varnishes. There was a public outcry, including from critics such as John Ruskin, who complained of heavy over-cleaning.[13] As a result of the controversy of perceived overzealous cleaning, Eastlake was

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(accessed May 5, 2015).

[6] Theodor Siegl , 'Conservation', *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol. 62, No. 291, Conservation (Autumn, 1966):1 27+129-156, 130.

[7] Cesare Brandi, 'Theory of Restoration, I, II, & III,' *Readings in Conservation: Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*, ed., Nicholas Stanley-Price, M. Kirby Talley, and Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro; transl., Gianni Ponti and Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro (Los Angelos: Getty Conservation Institute, [1963] 1996), 231.

[8] Chris Caple, *Conservation Skills: Judgement, Method and Decision Making* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 126.

[9] Sebastiano Barassi, 'Dreaming of a universal approach: Brandi's *Theory of Restoration* and the conservation of contemporary art', presented at the London seminar *Conservation: Principles, Dilemmas and Uncomfortable Truths*, (September 24, 2009), 2, http://www.icom-cc.org/54/document/dreaming-of-a-universal-approach-brandis-theory-of-restoration-and-the-conservation-of-contemporary-art/?id=777#.VeBADiSKj6Y, (accessed may 5, 2015).

[10] Glenn Wharton, 'The Challenges of Conserving Contemporary Art', *Collecting the New*. ed., Bruce Altshuler, (Princeton University Press, 2005), 164.

[11] K.R. Sutherland, 'Solvent extractable components of oil paint films' (PhD diss., University of Amsterdam, 2001), 9.

[12] Sheldon Keck, 'Some Picture Cleaning Controversies: Past and Present', *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Spring, 1984): 73-87, 75.

[13] Caple 2000, 96.

forced to resign.[14]

Gradually conservation treatments adhering to the tastes of the time were questioned at large, with a focus on the dubious ethics of the treatments and their representation of authenticity. Although it was not until the 1930s that an international conference took place with aim of consolidating and exchanging ideas on conservation methods.[15] The conference set in motion the creation of networks and sharing of expertise, opening the field and discussion. Although institutionalised ideas on the practice of conservation began to form in the nineteenth century, they only became formalised in the twentieth century.

Conferences such as 'the International Conference on Examination and Conservation of Works of Art' made ground for the development of, among others, the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC), founded in 1950, in order to, in the words of founder George Leslie Stout: 'provide a permanent organisation which would seek improvement in the knowledge and the working standards necessary to protect, preserve and maintain the integrity of cultural holdings.'[16] Alongside the formalisation of the conservation profession and standards, the concept of the conservator was growing towards that of a 'high-level collaborator', with the focus still critically on the art object, and, as seen through the teachings of Brandi, heavily prioritising the work's visual aesthetics.[17]

Contemporary conservation theorist Muñoz-Viñas described traditional conservation as a 'truth-enforcement' operation in which the conservator tries to remain faithful to the notion of the artwork's 'original condition'.[18] This assumes a singular static authenticity. The so-called 'original condition' of the 'original object' focuses on the material state of the work, connecting it to the artwork's authenticity. It presupposes that there is an original and singular state to which the work should try to stay as close as possible.

However, as already noted, from the twentieth century onwards, material selection

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[14] Bernard Ridderbos, 'Objects and Questions', *Early Netherlandish Paintings: Rediscovery, Reception and Research*, ed., Bernhard Ridderbos, Anne van Buren, and Henk van Veen, (Amsterdam: AmsterdamUniversity Press, 1995), 23; Eastlake was eventually vindicated in 1853.

[15] The International Conference on Examination and Conservation of Works of Art, held in Rome, October 1930, sponsored by the Museum Office of the Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (a branch of the League of Nations, forerunner to the current UNESCO).

[16] Kate Stonor, 'George Stout, The Monuments Men and IIC,' *International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works*, https://www.iiconservation.org/node/4560, (accessed May 5, 2015).

[17] Joyce Hill Stoner, 'Changing Approaches in Art Conservation: 1925 to the Present', *Scientific Examination of Art: Modern Techniques in Conservation and Analysis* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2005), 40.

[18] Salvador Muñoz-Vinas, *Contemporary Theory of Conservation* (Oxford: Routledge, 2005), 65.

and meaning became more ambiguous. Furthermore, the notion that an artwork should exist in a singular state has also been put into question. As a response, developments within conservation theory and practice have accordingly shifted the weight placed around an artwork's material in order to include the artist's intent. This has redirected the conservator's focus to include the significance of an artwork's concept and how the material is meant to function. Accordingly, we see that the conservator's role, and that of other stakeholders, including the curator, and indeed the museum, as well as the future of artworks from the twentieth century onwards, remains part of an ongoing discussion.[19] As a practitioner, the conservator is no longer isolated from wider discussions about the artwork, but alongside other stakeholders must engage with questions surrounding the parameters of an artwork before resorting to any pragmatic and hands on decisions. In accordance with the new needs of artworks from the twentieth century onwards, the conservator has assumed new tasks.

The increased formalized discussion around conservation of the twentieth century has slowly begun to make space for discussions around new ideas and practical approaches to conservation practice due to the changing nature of art of this time. This became evident in the 1994 'Nara Document on Authenticity', in which conservation has been defined as 'all efforts designed to understand cultural heritage, know its history and meaning, ensure its material safeguard and, as required, its presentation, restoration and enhancement.'[20] This inclusive definition critically shifts the traditional focus away from an artwork's material and allows for a much more open understanding of the artwork. Whereas traditionally, as described by conservator Pip Laurenson, 'any discussion of damage or loss quickly moves into the realm of ontology in the need to define change against something perceived as the identity of the work.'[21] Although Laurenson shares this note in relation to her paper, 'Authenticity, Change and Loss in the Conservation of Time-based Media Installations', she notes that this also has implications for 'a wider range of conservation objects, leaving open the possibility of a unified broad definition of conservation.'[22] The restrictive thinking in line with more traditional conservation practice proves equally

[19] Ijsbrand Hummelen, 'Conservation strategies for modern and contemporary art: recent developments in the Netherlands', *Cr*, issue 3 (2005): 22-26, 23.

[20] At 'The Nara Conference on Authenticity, held from 1-6 November 1994, forty-five participants from twenty-eight countries discussed the many complex issues associated with defining and assessing authenticity. It was noted that in some languages of the world, there is no word to express precisely the concept of authenticity,' http://whc.unesco.org/archive/nara94.htm, (accessed May 6, 2015). International Council for Monuments and Sites, *The Nara Document on Authenticity*, Nara, Japan 1995.

[21] Pip Laurenson, 'Authenticity, Change and Loss in the Conservation of Time-based Media Installations', *Tate Papers*, Issue 6, (October 2006), http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/authenticity-change-and-loss-conservation-time-based-media, (accessed January 5, 2015).

[22] Ibid.

unhelpful for temporary artworks which have a more fluid identity and, like time-based media installations, require out-of-the-box thinking.

Possible conservation treatment approaches are more ambiguous when faced with works which do not hold to traditional notions of longevity and singularity. The traditional focus on material originality and object completeness stemming from the institutionalized practice of the early nineteenth century shifts with the frameworks of modern and contemporary artworks. The conservator, among other stakeholders such as the curator and collector, have begun, with works from the twentieth century onwards, to reconsider where the artwork lies, and to read an artwork from multiple angles.

Current conservation treatments are applied after considering both the physical properties of the material, and the way it relays the philosophy and creative conceptual intentions of the artist, as 'it is the materials themselves that express artistic subjectivity.'[23] Any solution to the problems which stem from the vulnerability of modern and contemporary artworks must be handled holistically, or through what curator Mildred Constantine discusses as 'a philosophy of inclusionism', which is to say that the multiple layers which make up and inform the artwork, from material selection, construction, and artist's intention, need to be considered when approaching the artwork and before deciding how to proceed.[24]

Faced with changes in creative practices, conservators have begun to rethink their methodologies as they come to grips with new materials, technologies and conceptually driven art.[25] The key need for change in the conservator's approach is caused by novel materials, increased vulnerability to physical defects and technological obsolescence, performative aspects (such as use of motion and sound), and rapid decay. Changes made to the works pose an increased risk of loss of the work's context.[26]

The transformation of conservation philosophy has been assisted by the formalisation of ethical and professional standards within the field throughout the twentieth century as professional organisations began to form with stipulated codes of

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[23] Salvatore Lorusso, C. Matteucci, Andrea Natali, and S. A. Apicella, 'Traditional and non-traditional, innovative and ephemeral materials and techniques in today's cultural heritage', *Russian Chemical Bulletin*, International Edition, Vol. 62, No. 7, (July 2013): 1671 – 1681.

[24] Mildred Constantine, 'Preserving the Legacy of 20th-Century Art', *The Getty Conservation Institute Newsletter 13.2,* (Summer 1998),

http://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications_resources/newsletters/13_2/feature1.html, (accessed May 7, 2015).

[25] Ibid.

[26] Stefan Michalski, 'Conservation Lessons from Other Types of Museums and a Universal Database for Collection Preservation', *Modern Art: Who Cares? An Interdisciplinary Research Project and an International Symposium on the Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art*, ed. IJsbrand Hummelen and Dionne Sillé, (London: Archetype Publications, 1999), 290.

ethics and standards for practice.[27] Alongside these changes, various international conferences, all with subsequent publications, have been held to tackle the question of how to cope with modern and contemporary artworks and have assisted in creating a pluralist model of cooperative research. Conferences include, amongst others, 'Modern Art: Who Cares? An Interdisciplinary Research Project and International Symposium on the Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art' held in Amsterdam in 1997, which was the first symposium of its scale to tackle new media and new material issues within modern and contemporary art, bringing together experts at the forefront of their field.[28] The conference 'Mortality Immortality? The Legacy of 20th Century Art', which was held at the Getty Centre in Los Angeles in 1998, specifically addressed issues of ephemerality and longevity from the standpoints of professionals from a range of disciplines, including artists, museum directors, curators, conservators, art historians, dealers, collectors, and scientists, as well as a philosopher and a lawyer.[29] The conference 'Art, Conservation and Authenticities: Material, Concept, Context' held at the University of Glasgow in 2007 opened up a discussion on the concept of 'authenticity' as explored from a wide range of approaches, some object-based, some more conceptual and philosophical, in order to demonstrate the plurality of the term.[30] The conference 'Art Today – Cultural Property of Tomorrow: The Conservation and Restoration of Contemporary Artwork', organized by the Section Française de l'Institut International de Conservation (SFIIC) in Paris in 2009, explored the needs of diverse contemporary artworks and how they might be conserved.[31] As a follow-up to 'Modern Art: Who Cares?' (1997), the symposium 'Contemporary Art: Who Cares? Research and Practices in Contemporary Art Conservation' was held in Amsterdam in 2010.[32] As a continuation of its earlier namesake, it aimed to address the current standard in care and conservation of modern and contemporary art. 'Fail Better'

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[27] This includes the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC) founded in 1950; the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice of the American Institute for Conservation, 1994; the Professional Guidelines of the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorer' Organizations (ECCO), 1993; and the Code of Ethics of the International Council of Museums – Conservation Committee, 1984.

[28] IJsbrand Hummelen and Dionne Sillé ed., *Modern Art: Who Cares? An Interdisciplinary Research Project and an International Symposium on the Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art* (London: Archetype Publications, 1999).

[29] Miguel Angel Corzo ed., *Mortality Immortality? The Legacy of 20th-Century Art* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 1999).

[30] Erma Hermens and Tina Fiske ed., Art, Conservation and Authenticities: Material, Concept, Context, Proceedings of the International Conference held at the University of Glasgow, 12-14 September 2007 (London: Archetype Publications, 2009).

[31] Marcel Stefanaggi et al. ed., *Art Today – Cultural Property of Tomorrow: The Conservation and Restoration of Contemporary Artworks* [*Art D'Aujourd'Hui Patrimoine de Demain: Conservation et Restauration des Oeuvres Contemporaines*], Preprints of the SFIIC conference, 24-26 June 2009, Paris (Paris: Section francaise de l'Institut de conservation, 2009).

[32] Tatja Scholte and Glenn Wharton ed., *Inside Installations: Theory and Practice in the Care of Complex Artworks* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011).

organised by the Verband der Restauratoren (VDR) in Hamburg in 2013, specifically considered the conflict arising from the conservator's aspiration to preserve the original material of an artwork and the increasingly common practice of replacing unstable or failed materials in degrading artworks. The significance of the practice of documentation is increasingly recognized and has led to conferences such as 'Performing Documentation in the Conservation of Contemporary Art' organized by the Network for Conservation of Contemporary Art (NeCCAR) in Lisbon in 2013.[33] More recently there has been the Tate-led research network 'Collecting the Performative' which ran from April 2012 through January 2014, which specifically explored emerging practice for collecting and conserving performance-based art. In December 2014, the University of Glasgow hosted the conference 'Authenticity in Transition: Changing Practices in Contemporary Art Making and Conservation', which was supported by the Network for Conservation of Contemporary Art Research and funded by The Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). Research efforts and shared platforms such as these are together actively shaping the guidelines of practice and creating a growing body of literature which is redefining the philosophy guiding conservation practice and how we understand modern and contemporary artworks.

Furthermore, research institutions have begun sharing their data on artists' materials, methods and intentions, including through the International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art (INCCA), which is funded by the European Commission and organised by the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage and the Tate Gallery.[34] INCCA provides a virtual archive of collected information about artists' intents, including an extensive database of references to unpublished documents such as video interviews, notes, and analyses of materials held by member institutions. Access is obtained through contacting the relevant institutions. In addition, INCCA provides an online literature database of up-to-date conservation publications as well as posts on activities happening in the field of contemporary art conservation, such as conferences, websites, and professional guidelines. Alongside this, the Variable Media Network, funded by the Daniel Langlois Foundation for Art, Science, and Technology, and coordinated by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York is a shared database which houses information about the re-installation of non-traditional artworks, primarily for museum staff, but also accessible to the general public.[35] The INCCA website also hosts CoCARe,

[33] http://performingdocumentation.fcsh.unl.pt/Site/home.html, (accessed, May 4, 2015).

[34] http://www.incca.org, (accessed September 20, 2014).

[35] http://www.variablemedia.net, (accessed May 4, 2015).

the international and interdisciplinary PhD and Postdoc network for Conservation of Contemporary Art Research. CoCARe was established on June 10, 2010 during the Contemporary Art: Who Cares? symposium in Amsterdam by Dr. Vivian van Saaze. Its main goal is to encourage and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and expertise among early and mid-career researchers in the field of conservation of contemporary art.

These collaborative initiatives share current research and reflect the developing attitude towards contemporary conservation theory. Moreover, they demonstrate a shift from the traditional practice of preserving a static original material object as developed in the early nineteenth century, to the current more inclusive alternatives which encompass a more open understanding of the artwork. This ultimately shows the profession's ability to cope with the changes required by new artworks, and for the practice to reconsider what it means to conserve in the first place. Current conservation practice recognises that not all artworks are physical works, or in the case of temporary artworks, that they are physical works which cease to be physical. Change is sometimes permitted or even to be embraced.

3.3 How to recognize a temporary artwork

With the inclusivity of materials and structural methods brought on by contemporary art, many materially unstable works are in fact not temporary artworks. The significance in exploring the ambiguity of material and how it determines the longevity of a temporary artwork illustrates the argument put forth by Fernando Dominguez Rubio and Elizabeth Silva, namely that,

> one has to explore the trajectories of these artworks, how they come to occupy different object-positions in it, and how these object-positions shape the specific ways in which subject and institutional positions, as well as boundaries, are distributed and transformed over time.[36]

The terminology 'object-position' is borrowed from the field of Material Studies.[37] It refers to the relationship between the material object and human social and cultural practices and experiences. The material object is significant because of what we think it might tell us.[38]

[36] Fernando Dominguez Rubio and Elizabeth B. Silva, 'Materials in the Field: Object-trajectories and Object-positions in the Field of Contemporary Art', *Cultural Sociology* vol. 7 no. 2 (June 2013):161-178, 164.

[37] The field of Material Studies researches the relationship between people and material objects, including their history, making, use, preservation and interpretation. Material Studies takes an interdisciplinary approach, drawing from multiple fields, including art history, archaeology, anthropology, history, and museum studies.

[38] Webb Keane and Christopher Tilly, 'Subjects and Objects', *Handbook of Material Culture, ed.,* Christopher Tilley, Webb Keane, and Susanne Kuechler-Fogden (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2013), 198.

Temporary artworks are transitory objects, which is interesting because as such they straddle the line between objects and non-objects. There is a distinction to be made between works whose transience is mitigated by making them permanent and those which become non-objects, which is to say works which physically cease to be. Whether an artwork is a permanent object or a transitory object is not evident from the material selection, as *palimpsest* (1989) illustrates. Rather, to recognize whether an artwork provides a stable material reference point – whether it can be repeated or replaced – requires additional information. An artist must disclose what the role of the material is within their work as a whole in order to discern the most appropriate treatment of their work.

Parallel to the material selection, the manner in which the material acts, specifically referring to the material's inherent physical properties and behaviour, also impacts the way the artwork functions as a whole and how it engages with various stakeholders (which include the artist, the exhibiting body, the collecting body, the art audience, the curator, and the conservator). For instance, returning to the example of *palimpsest* (1989), which consists of many organic components, including snails and cabbage, the ability to replace both the snails and the cabbage inherently changes the shelf-life of the work and the manner in which the work is carried into the future. If an artwork is truly temporary, on the other hand, such as Anya Gallaccio's *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996), discussed in the first chapter, this limits primary access to the work and challenges the possibility of durational engagement with the work.

The material's role within an artwork and how the artist envisions this impacting the audience's encounter and experience with the work can be divided into three main categories for this thesis:

1. Artworks made of fugitive or otherwise vulnerable materials for which the artist supports conservation methods and measures that keep the work viable. These may be applied by the artist or can be applied in collaboration with a conservation team.

2. Artworks made of fugitive or otherwise vulnerable materials which make the work as a whole temporary, according to the artist's intent.

3. Artworks made out of stable materials which are destroyed and therefore become temporary nonetheless.

The first category concerns works that are in fact not temporary artworks, though due to their material selection they could be, if not for the artist's collaboration in countering the work's material instability. *palimpsest* (1989) clearly falls into this category. The second and third categories are both temporary artworks, with the third category being fairly commonplace in commissioned work, such as Gallaccio's *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996).

The second category is primarily the focus of this chapter. This is because it is notably difficult to determine on the basis of material alone whether an artwork is indeed meant to be temporary. There is a tension created by the difficulty of distinguishing between artworks made of fugitive or otherwise vulnerable materials for which the artist supports conservation methods and measures that keep the work viable, and artworks for which the artist does not support measures to sustain the physical work. It is particularly interesting, in relation to how an artwork is experienced, to consider how to relate the first and second categories, and to evaluate exactly what they say about each other. In both categories, artists use difficult-to-conserve materials, and the artist's intent cannot be read from the material selection and action alone.[39] Art critic Michael Archer discusses the challenge of seeing material purpose as the 'conflict between transience and persistence'.[40] In both categories, the material's instability does not function as inherent vice, but rather as a form of creative hubris. Exploring the significance of the material, how its symbolism and duration play a role in the work, is a means of excavating the underlying narrative that material plays in constructing and supporting the artwork as a whole.

However, the artist's intention nonetheless becomes a necessary component in understanding what the possible future of the work is. Whether an artwork needs to completely cease to exist, or can be replaced infinitely, much like *palimpsest* (1989), depends on the artist. Art historian Matthew Bowman observes the notion that whereas 'destruction appears an immanent condition of art as such rather than some external potentiality; what destruction in art acknowledges and highlights, for its own part, is that inherent destructibility.'[41] However, as seen in Hamilton and Clark's work, an artist can comment on themes of destruction through material change without requiring the full obsolescence of the art object. An artist's vision of the relationship between material and the work as a whole determines whether the art object can persist.

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[39] Note that these can be organic e.g. foodstuffs, or inorganic e.g. plastics.

[40] Michael Archer, 'Contemporary art is not ephemeral', *The Guardian*, (November 18, 2009), http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/nov/18/contemporary-art-ephemeral, (accessed March 7, 2015).

[41] Matthew Bowman, 'For a Concept of Immaterial Indestructability', *Permanence of the Transient: Precariousness in Art*, Camila Maroja, Caroline Menezes, Fabrizio Augusto Poltronieri (Eds.), (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 32.

By also exploring a body of works which are materially unstable, but not temporary artworks, such as *palimpsest*. the ambiguity of material is highlighted. This brings attention to what works which are not temporary might tell us about works which are. We will consider what sets temporary artworks apart from other artworks made up of ephemeral materials. This will clarify the material's significance within the work as a whole, but also the ambiguity presented by material selection alone. Works which are physically unstable, such as *palimpsest*, are not always temporary. Whereas some seemingly physically stable works are in fact temporary, as with artist Richard Wright's murals, which will be discussed later on in this chapter. And in some cases, such as with the body of works left behind by artist Eva Hesse, also discussed in this chapter, we simply do not have a complete picture, due to unclear and incomplete statements left behind. Reading the material and postulating the longevity of a work as a whole is problematic without additional information from the artist, as intent cannot be read from material alone.

What follows is an exploration of how certain artworks comprised of ephemeral material can be recreated according to a specified set of procedures or guidelines made by the artist. This is in contrast to other works, such as temporary artworks, which physically exist only once and therefore require alternative methods of conservation to promote durational engagement. One of the key factors in the dynamic between material and the artwork as a whole, highlighted by Dominguez Rubio and Silva, and of particular interest to temporary artworks, is the notion of temporal trajectory – very basically, how artworks physically change over time. As is critically noted by Dominguez Rubio and Silva, 'in spite of the illusion of fixity and timelessness that typically surrounds them, artworks are never still.'[42] The question that needs to be raised, however, is what degree of stillness can be reached, which is to say, can a physical object be stabilized or transformed to seemingly attain some sort of physical stability, and what is the impact of this upon the work? In relation to temporary artworks this also leads specifically to considering the implications of trying to sustain temporary artworks.

For the second category, the work's singular material embodiment is critical, which makes it much more difficult to conserve a work for future audiences. The temporary artwork exists outside the formalised boundaries of a stable or permanent art object. The material life of a temporary artwork is by necessity limited; it cannot be reproduced without compromising its uniqueness and the singular primary experience it promotes. Temporary artworks are intended to not last beyond their 'original' material state. Therefore, physically stabilizing a temporary artwork or recreating it radically changes its

[42] Dominguez Rubio and Silva, 168.

nature – arguably turning it into something else and raising ethical issues of 'authenticity' and 'integrity'.

In short, the physical properties of an artwork as a whole, the material selection, its materials unmaking, and manner in which the audience is aware of and participates in this, inform the relationship between the artwork as object and its transition to non-object. These dynamics shape and underpin what it means for a temporary artwork to continue to exist outside its initial material form. Understanding the relationship between an artwork as a whole and its material provides insight into what is lost or gained through a temporary artwork's material loss. How the artwork is understood both short-term and long-term is affected by these primary dynamics, which include the material significance and changeability of the work.

3.4 Artist's intent

What one can assume an artwork discloses has changed. Disclosure, as it is used here, refers to what the artwork tells us about itself and how it does so, in particular as related to its material and construction. Knowledge of the material properties and construction is not enough. Instead, consideration should be made of what material or technique should and should not do within the work as a whole.[43] As art historian and conservator Lydia Beerkens observes:

> The conservation practice of modern and contemporary art has become increasingly complex and dynamic. A thorough analysis of the artwork and the collection of detailed material knowledge no longer suffice to solve conservation issues. The artist, the choices made by the artist and the history of creation of the artwork play an increasingly prominent part as (additional) sources of information.'[44]

What is relevant to the work and what can be discarded, changed and replaced cannot be read from its material alone, and must be supplemented with information provided by the artist in order to elucidate his or her motives and philosophy.

The increased combination of materials and possible intentions poses an ambiguity as to how to read works from the twentieth century onwards. As conservator Julia Nagle points out,

> We try to think what's right for the work – is it speaking for itself, is it being compromised by the damage or can it still be read in the way it's meant to be read?

[43] Ibid., 33.

[44] Ibid., 9.

> But it's hard sometimes with contemporary work. What the hell's intentional, or not?[45]

There is a rebalance with works from the twentieth century onwards between what a work offers and what additional information needs to be disclosed alongside a work in order to read and understand it. Moreover, further information is lost when an artwork ceases to be physically present at all, as is the fate of all temporary artworks. The art made today reflects infinite possibility. There has been what critic and curator Francesco Poli refers to as an 'epistemological break' in artistic practice and theory.[46] The concept of an 'epistomological break' was first conceived of by philosopher Gaston Bachelard to explain the radical shifts taking place, and reconfiguring unconscious structures immanent within the realm of the sciences.[47] The concept was further developed by philosophers Georges Canguilhem and Louis Althusser, after which it was brought out of the strictly scientific field by philosopher Michel Foucault.[48] Foucault described epistemological breaks not only in the history of medicine, but also applied them to the history of prisons, sexuality, and psychiatry. Poli uses the concept of the 'epistemological break' to describe the shift in creative practice that we see in the twentieth century. It is a useful term, as it clarifies how radical the changes of the twentieth century were. This shift in thinking and creative practice, including the use of unconventional materials, as discussed in Chapter 2, has changed the kind of art made and how we can think of collecting and conserving for posterity. While the presence of unstable and unconventional materials in artworks is no longer unusual, now including everything from foodstuffs, taxidermy and excrement, the artist's intent cannot be read from the selection and application of these materials alone. Poli states that in contemporary collecting and conservation thought 'It is the materials themselves that represent artistic subjectivity.'[49] Therefore, to understand the artwork in its fullest sense requires input and clarification from the artist.

The artist's intent can be understood as the artist's ideas and wishes surrounding their artworks, and where he or she envisions the identity of their work as a whole lying.

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[45] Andrew Dickson, 'How Banksy's policeman got his legs back: tales from art's emergency ward', *The Guardian*, (August 18, 2015), http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/aug/18/art-emergency-ward-fix-banksy-rothko?CMP=share_btn_link, (accessed August 18, 2015).

[46] Francesco Poli, 'Preface', *Conserving Contemporary Art: Issues, Methods, Materials, and Research*, ed., Oscar Chiantore and Antonio Rava (Los Angelos: Getty Publications: 2012), 7.

[47] Gaston Bachelard, *Le Nouvel Esprit Scientifique*, [1934], transl. *The Philosophy of the New Scientific Mind*, (New York: Viking Press, 1968).

[48] Georges Canguilhem, 'Galilee: La signification de l'œuvre de Galilée et la leçon de l'homme', [1946], *Études d'histoire et de la philosophie de la science* (Paris: Vrin, 1968); Louis Althusser, Etienne Balibar, *Reading Capital (Radical Thinkers)*, [1968], transl., Ben Brewster (New York: Verso, 2009); Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed., Colin Gordon, transl., Colin Gordon, Leo Marshal, John Mepham and Kate Sober (New York: Pantheon, 1980).

[49] Poli, 9.

This impacts the perimeters of how a work's material can be altered and interacted with, determining its treatment. Artist's intent is meant to clarify an artwork's framework through pinpointing where the artwork's identity lies and the philosophy which carries the work. Through formulating an artist's statement, a document of the artist's intent, something which is becoming increasingly common, notably in the case of artworks which are commissioned and/or sold, the artist is able to communicate constraints around their work and to assert which treatments are permissible. The ambiguity posed by material readings alone often requires this additional information, which has implications for the correct care and presentation of the work. In taking note of the artist's intent, one is able to clarify the artwork's authenticity, which for the purposes of temporary artworks in particular should be understood as an artwork's integrity.

Whereas authenticity in more traditional artworks is often connected to the artwork's original material construction, this is more complex for more contemporary artworks in which the material's changing state, or indeed even the material itself, might not be deemed important by the artist. For instance, if we return to Hamilton and Clark's work *palimpsest* (1989), several of the work's material components, including the snails and the cabbage, are indeed replaceable. In the case of a truly temporary artwork, the material cannot be stabilised, and instead the material object must be allowed to be physically unmade. And so an artwork's authenticity and integrity can also be connected to its visual aesthetics *or* its concept.[50] As explained by conservator Gwynne Ryan, 'original surface', meaning the original material and its initial visual look, loses its hierarchical position within conservation considerations, becoming less important. Instead the role of the material and the manner in which it is supposed to behave become more significant.[51] An increased level of narrative provided by the artist is needed to understand the full work and not put it at risk of inadequate treatment and loss.[52] Accordingly, authenticity is located through the artist's intent. Art historians Rebecca Gordon and Erma Hermens suggest that at times, authenticity and intent can be used synonymously.[53]

By examining the selection of materials as well as the manner in which these materials are used, we begin to be able to assess the function of the materials in relation to

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[50] Caroline van der Elst and Alan Phenix, 'Proceedings', *Modern Art: Who Cares? An Interdisciplinary Research Project and an International Symposium on the Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art*, ed., IJsbrand Hummelen and Dionne Sillé (London: Archetype Publications, 1999): 401 – 405, 404.

[51] Gwynne Ryan, 'Variable materials, variable roles: The shifting skills required in contemporary art conservation', *Objects Specialty Group Postprints*, Vol. 18, (2011): 105-112, 107.

[52] Both physical loss as well as loss of integrity and adequate representation.

[53] Rebecca Gordon and Erma Hermens, 'The Artist's Intent in Flux', *CeROArt*, (2013), http://ceroart.revues.org/3527, (accessed March, 2015).

the identity of the work. This includes understanding what it means for the work's decay to be on display, or equally why a work which is seemingly physically stable is later destroyed. However, object-based study alone does not suffice. Not all artists' works follow the same frameworks, even when they are constructed from similar materials. Assumptions and decisions should not be based on the material of the artwork alone. Rather, as Ryan emphasizes, the intention and motivation behind the creation of the work must be discussed.[54] When considering how to evaluate and possibly treat an artwork, both the selection of materials and meanings attributed by the artist must be considered.[55] Artist's intent must be continually referenced.

Furthermore, it is important to note that not all artworks by the same artist adhere to the same framework of material duration. French artist Jean Tinguely's (b. 1925) body of works are a clear example of this. The artist created a series of works in the Fifties and Sixties comprised of scrap materials which were compiled into faltering machines designed to move erratically. Some, but not all, of these kinetic works were meant to ultimately auto-destruct. Thus, not all of Tinguely's works were temporary artworks, despite having been fashioned out of similar materials, in a similar time, and even by the same artist.

Among artists there is variation in how the same material is used and therefore it is difficult to distinguish between how it is used in artworks, e.g. for visual aesthetics or for functionality.[56] Conservator Ysbrand van Hummelen explains that materials 'are given new and unexpected meanings by every artist who works with them.'[57] Without a clear discussion with the artist, the material gestures within the artwork rely on the reading and interpretation of outside parties to determine how to understand and treat the work as a whole. As a consequence, the artist's intention might be lost, and the integrity of the work inevitably suffers.

The difficulty of understanding the role of material and artist's intent is illustrated, among other cases, by the works made by German-born American artist Eva Hesse (b. 1936 - 1970) in the 1960s. Hesse pioneered the use of latex, fiberglass and plastics in the sixties, when little was known as to how these materials would age and affect the work as a

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[54] Laura van Straaten, 'Soap, chocolate and dung—how to preserve materials not built to last', *The Art Newspaper,* (2015), http://theartnewspaper.com/news/conservation/17193/, (accessed March 12, 2015).

[55] Lydia Beerkens et al., *The Artist Interview: For Conservation and Presentation of Contemporary Art Guidelines and Practice* (Heijningen: Jap Sam Book, 2012), 11.

[56] Notably Laurenson pays particular attention to time-based media, but clarifies that her observations can be applied further afield. Pip Laurenson, 'Developing strategies for the conservation of installations incorporating time-based media' with reference to Gary Hill's Between Cinema and a Hard Place', *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*, 40 (3), (2001): 259–66.

[57] IJsbrand Hummelen, 'The conservation of contemporary art: new methods and strategies?', *Mortality Immortality?: The Legacy of 20th-Century Art*, ed., Miguel Angel Corzo (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 1999): 171–4, 171.

whole. Hesse ultimately developed cancer and died at the tender age of 34 while her work was still gaining recognition.

Due to the heavy use of chemicals within Hesse's work, as well as the material selection, Hesse's oeuvre has aged poorly. As it was not known at the time how the material would age, and due to the untimely death of the artist, it is difficult to read from the material alone what Hesse would have wanted to happen to her work. In an interview, Hesse is recorded having said she was confused about the longevity of her works, elaborating to indicate that the complete properties of her materials were still unknown, and that her own stance was unclear.[58] She discussed her awareness that the rubber she used in some of her works did not last, but that the creative use of the material might be more important than its longevity.[59] However, she also indicated that she had thought about making more durable works to counter some of these problems. The interview makes apparent the artist's own lack of clarity about her ultimate intentions. Mostly, the works seemed to be produced with a kind of immediacy and only later, when confronted with the work's material change, did the artist begin to think about the work's future.[60]

The ambiguity of the material's future is paralleled by further enigmatic statements made by the artist, including 'Life doesn't last; art doesn't last. It doesn't matter.', which are often applied to considerations of how Hesse's work should be treated.[61] Arguably, in the case of Hesse, the reading of her choice of materials is influenced by an imposed reading of her illness. Art historian Anne Wagner criticizes this romanticisation of Hesse, stating that it creates a myth which does a disservice to the artist's work.[62] Within my research, I too am wary of falling prey to biographic fallacy.

In the absence of the artist, traditionally one could expect the work to speak of the artist's intention. Yet as we see with Hesse, and with other artists' works from the twentieth century, this is problematic. When deciding upon possible treatments, camps are divided. Art critic Stuart Morgan argued that 'any attempt to 'restore' these late pieces by Hesse would be a travesty.'[63] However, in opposition, fellow artist and friend Sol Lewitt argued that Hesse would not have wanted her work to completely vanish, arguing 'she

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[58] Eva Hesse, 'Eva Hesse on Impermanence of Her Materials' [video] http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/multimedia/videos/128, (accessed March 9, 2015).

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Tate Modern, 'Teacher and Group Leaders' Kit – Eva Hesse 13 November 02 – 9 March 03', 12, http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/hesse/hesse_tp.pdf, (accessed April 19, 2015).

[62] Mignon Nixon and Cindy Nemser, *Eva Hesse* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).

[63] Stuart Morgan, 'Oh! More Absurdity!', *Frieze Magazine*, Issue 11, (June-August 1993). http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/oh_more_absurdity/, (accessed February 19, 2012).

wanted her work to last'.[64] Yet this seems contrary to some of Hesse's statements about her own work, such as: 'I think people should see it in all its faded glory.'[65] Discussions around Hesse's work have formed part of the discourse on contemporary conservation and display practice and come to grips with the nature of understanding material and artist's intent – both shaping and being shaped by our current ideas on when to intervene with an artwork's material, and when a work should be deaccessioned.

3.4.1 Is the artist always right?

The extent and manner in which an artist should control their work, particularly after the work has already been completed, is controversial.[66] The position taken in this research is that the artist is not always right, which I will now explain. As will be demonstrated, artists' concerns for their work are at times different from the conservator's and the collector's. There are multiple intentions. These three stakeholders, which all have a vested interest in the artwork, approach it from different perspectives, and as such, their concerns do not always converge. Moreover, the artist's original intent is a concept in flux, as artists may change their minds.[67] In particular, later interventions suggested by an artist may no longer represent the artist's own original intent when they first conceived of and made a work.

Conservators Oscar Chiantore and Antonio Rava propose that 'essence lies in the artistic idea and not in their realisation' for ephemeral and conceptual artworks.[68] This radically proposes that the idea is always more important than the material, which is an extreme not upheld by this research. Furthermore, over a matter of time, an artist's ideas about his or her work might also no longer match up to their original idea. This is notably a question of ethics, raising the issue of trying to evaluate at which stage the artist's intention is most authentic, and equally when it ceases to be.

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[64] Jonathan Keats, 'The Afterlife of Eva Hesse', *Art and Antiques Magazine*, (April 2011), http://www.artandantiquesmag.com/2011/04/the-afterlife-of-eva-hesse/, (accessed February 17, 2012).

[65] Washington Pullman, 'Eva Hesse sculptures deteriorating at WSU museum', *North County Times* (October 4, 2006), http://www.nctimes.com/entertainment/art-and-theater/visual/article_0c0a1951-8ea5-5f58-8dd4-9ce196b3d30c.html#ixzz1ng3n3jXq, (accessed February 16, 2012). Layour

[66] This is indicated throughout conservation discussion by amongst others: Barbara Ferriani, 'How to Pass on an Idea', *Ephemeral Monument – History and conservation of Installation Art*, ed., Barbara Ferriani and Marina Puegliese (Los Angelos: Getty Publications, 2009), 120. Layout

[67] David Lowenthal, 'Changing Criteria of Authenticity', *Proceedings of the Nara Conference on Authenticity in Relation to the World Heritage Convention*, ed., K. E. Larsen (Norway: Riksantikvaren 1995): 121-135; David Lowenthal, 'Managing the Flux of Authenticity', *Proceedings of the Nara Conference on Authenticity in Relation to the World Heritage Convention*, ed., K. E. Larsen (Norway: Riksantikvaren 1995): 369-370.

[68] Oscar Chiantore and Antonio Rava, *Conserving Contemporary Art: Issues, Methods, Materials, and Research* (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2012), 166.

Taking an anthropological approach, philosopher and sociologist Renée van de Vall and art theorist Vivian van Saaze both propose that an artwork can be understood as having a biography, which is layered and dynamic.[69] The idea of an artwork as having a biography is indebted to anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, who first used the concept of a biography in application to things and whose work focused on the 'life' of things.[70] Additionally, the notion that an artwork can have multiple authenticities is also acknowledged.[71] If it is accepted that an artwork can have multiple authenticities, and a layered biography, it follows that the artist's earlier and later ideas can both be seen as part of the work. Through having a series of interviews with an artist over time, where possible, a change in the artist's ideas can be documented and taken into account.[72] However, these multiple and changing ideas may represent a conflict.

This conflict may come in the form of expressing interests which are 'either unachievable or undesirable by current owners.'[73] In these instances the artist's interests and intent cannot always be accommodated, lest it may change the identity of the artwork in question and ultimately transform it into another work.[74] The identity of artworks is at the heart of what is at stake. Those who enter into this discussion are the artist and the other stakeholders charged with caring for the artwork in question, be it the curator, conservator, or collector.

The dialogue around artworks and their future lives depends very much on who cares for the works and the context in which they understand them, which is influenced by the conversations that they have, or notably have not, had with the artist, as well as current policy and philosophy. New approaches and strategies have been developed through projects such as *Modern Art: Who Cares?* (1997), a symposium which clarified the need to

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[69] Renee van de Vall et. al., 'Reflections on a biographical approach to contemporary art conservation', Proceedings ICOM-CC 16th triennial conference, Lisbon, ed. J. Bridgland (Critério, 2011); Vivian van Saaze, 'authenticity in Practice: An Ethnographic Study into the Preservation of *One Candle* by Nam June Paik', *Art, Conservation and Authenticities: Material, Concept, Context*, ed., Erma Hermens and Tina Fiske (London: Archetype Publicaitons, 2009): 190-198.

[70] Arjun Appadurai, 'Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value', *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986): 3-63.

[71] Erma Hermens and Tina Fiske, *Art, Conservation and Authenticities: Material, Concept, Context*, (London: Archetype Publications, 2009): 190-198.

[72] Crystel Sanchez, 'VOCA'S Artist Interview Workshop: Crystal Sanchez's Experience', *Voices in Contemporary Art* (June 6, 2013, http://www.voca.network/crystal-sanchezs-experience/, (accessed March 4, 2015).

[73] Glenn Wharton, 'The Challenges of Conserving Contemporary Art,' *Collecting the New*, ed., Bruce Altshuler, (Princeton University Press, 2005).

[74] Sherri Irvin, 'The Artist's Sanction in Contemporary Art', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 63 (2005): 315-326.

circulate and share technical and scientific knowledge.[75]

The later conference, *Mortality/Immortality* (1999), pressed the need to look at material not just as a physical and aesthetic component of the work, but also to investigate the artwork material's theoretical, philosophical and ethical components.[76] The speakers, who included artists, curators, restorers, gallery owners, collectors, philosophers and lawyers all agreed that it would be useful for guidelines to be established. Indeed, this chapter asks questions which inevitably contribute to the dialogue around the guidelines for the care of modern and contemporary art.

Archivist Katrina Windon has put forward that explicit and frank discussions need to be had with artists in which their desires are specifically outlined, and can serve as a means to clarify possible strategies for handling their work with the curator or the work's purchaser.[77] Various institutions have set up questionnaires and made information available publicly, including through the International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art (INCCA).

As discussed by curator Hilkka Hiiop, 'every change in the original material of a work of art, whether caused by the natural ageing process of the work or physical conservation, may cause unwanted misinterpretations, if not the destruction of the work's conception.'[78] Trying to halt the transience of an artwork may be contrary to the artist's intent. Accordingly, if we cannot isolate and halt the material, then we must ask the following question, as Hiiop does, 'How should a process be collected?'[79] Temporary artworks are created with a particular limited lifecycle in mind, within a particular time and context. What defines the artwork and is critical to its state(s) is dependent on the conditions that the artist has intended and specified for the work.[80]

In cases such as German artist Gustav Metzger's (b. 1926) auto-destructive art, the artist intriguingly decided to recreate his acid action painting from the Sixties for a

[75] Proceedings were published in IJsbrand Hummelen and Dionne Sillé, ed., *Modern Art: Who Cares? An Interdisciplinary Research Project and an International Symposium on the Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art* (London: Archetype Publications, 1999).

[76] Proceedings were published in Miguel Angel Corzo, ed., *Mortality Immortality? The Legacy of 20th-Century Art* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 1999).

[77] Katrina Windon, 'The Right to Decay with Dignity: Documentation and the Negotiation between an Artist's Sanction and the Cultural Interest', *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America*, vol. 31, (2012): 142-157, 144.

[78] Hilkka Hiiop, *Contemporary Art in the Museum: How to Preserve the Ephemeral*? *The Preservation Strategy and methods of the Contemporary Art Collection of the Art Museum of Estonia* (Estonian Academy of Arts and the Art Museum of Estonia, 2012), 176.

[79] Ibid, 81.

[80] Pip Laurenson, 'Authenticity, Change and Loss in the Conservation of Time-based Media Installations', *[Im]permanence. Culture In/Out of Time*, ed., Judith Schachter and Stephen Brockman (Pittsburgh: Center for the Arts in Society, Carnegie Mellon University, 2008).

retrospective of his work for Tate Britain in 2004. The remade work's relationship towards the first work, made more than four decades prior, is not straightforward and how it is understood depends in part on how the artist sees this relationship. It can be questioned whether the later version Metzger created is indeed the same artwork. The compilation 'Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949-1979' sets the framework for much of the discourse around the debate of performance and object and how to keep artworks 'alive'.[81]

Related to the complex discussion of remaking artworks and how to keep artworks alive, English artist Damien Hirst (b. 1965), infamously replaced the core material, namely the shark, in his piece *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (1991) when the work was sold from one collector to another in 2004, and the artwork had physically aged poorly. The work consisted of a tiger shark preserved in formaldehyde solution suspended in a glass and steel vitrine. After the artist replaced the contents, the vitrine was the sole 'original' material from the initial work. Nevertheless, Hirst maintained that it was the same artwork. The conservation treatment of the work in question poses considerable ethical questions around how to define and understand the 'authentic' artwork and where the boundaries of its integrity lie. Hirst has claimed that material posterity is not one of his concerns, but rather that he is focused on communicating an idea.[82] Cases such as Hirst's are interesting because they signal the artist's voice as the primary source of authority. They mark the stark shift away from a focus on original material.

Nevertheless, the treatment of an artwork cannot be changed on the spot, even by the artist; rather, as emphasized by Gordon and Hermens, it 'must tally with the evidential markers, [e.g. tangible evidence] of the artist's creative decision-making leading to the work's communication.'[83] Artists change their minds over their lifetimes, throughout their careers, and sometimes even over the course of an interview. This is made evident in the significant book on artist interview methodology and collection of interviews, 'The Artist Interview: For Conservation and Presentation of Contemporary Art Guidelines and Practice.'[84] Sometimes multiple interviews with the same artist are desirable.[85] Artists often

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[81] Paul Schimmel and Kristine Stiles, *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998).

[82] Alison Bracker, 'Oh, The Shark Has Pretty Teeth, Dear', *Conservation Journal*, Issue 35 (Summer 2000), http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/issue-35/oh,-the-shark-has-pretty-teeth,-dear/, (accessed August 20, 2015).

[83] Gordon and Hermens 2013.

[84] Beerkens 2013.

[85] Ibid, 15.

have conflicting opinions about their work and what is important and can and should be done to it. This conflict is sometimes resolved at later points in the artist's career. There needs to be some caution with regard to the factors which influence the artist's intent over the course of time. However, there should also be space for the artist's own evaluation of their work. To a certain extent, this means that decisions need to be left open.[86] The artist becomes what conservator Shelley Sturman describes as a partner in conservation, whereby a balance must be struck between compromise and collaboration for the sake of the artwork.[87] The conservator needs to be aware, when faced with a temporary artwork, that the artist's intention might not translate to traditional aims, such as stabilising the work's material.[88]

Working with the artist at the time that a work is created and directly documenting their ideas regarding the constraints of the work is desirable, where possible. This helps to avoid the confusion, or later change of heart, that come from reflection and time, which might interfere with the work. The most straightforward way of understanding the work is by discussing it with the artist, alongside all the particulars which complete and define its identity. These include taking note of and documenting the material selection, and movement, and whether the material can be replaced or changed, and indeed whether change can or should be mitigated. This discussion is one which can take place over years, as the artist's understanding of their own work will at times change.

Though there should, as discussed, be some caution in considering whether the artist is always right. It must be noted that the artist can be influenced by talking about their work. In discussing and recording artist's intent, the person recording, be it the curator, collector, or the conservator, by necessity implicitly also becomes a kind of collaborator influencing the work.[89] Some concern has been raised by numerous conservators that one does not want to interfere with the artist's creativity, although this may occur in the process of questioning and informing the artist about the longevity of their work. For example, the material choice or ways in which the artist works as a whole might be affected, which could present itself as a loss in their creative practice.

However, there is general support in contemporary conservation and collecting

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[86] Ibid.

[87] Shelley Sturman, 'Necessary Dialogue: The Artist As Partner in Conservation,' *Modern Art: Who Cares? An Interdisciplinary Research Project and an International Symposium on the Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art*, ed. IJsbrand Hummelen and Dionne Sillé, (London: Archetype Publications, 1999): 397 – 399, 396

[88] Erma Hermens, 'Proceeding Group II,' *Modern Art: Who Cares? An Interdisciplinary Research Project and an International Symposium on the Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art*, ed., IJsbrand Hummelen and Dionne Sillé, (London: Archetype Publications, 1999): 397 – 399, 398.

[89] Ryan 2011.

philosophy that the artist's intent should be recorded, and that where possible, the artist's wishes should be respected.[90] The artist is the closest source to the artwork. The artist's rights have furthermore come to be backed by legal acts supporting the artist's moral rights such as the Visual Artists Rights Act (VARA) implemented in the US in 1990. VARA covers 'the right of attribution', which grants artists the right to be identified with their works, as well as the 'right of integrity', which grants artists the right to protect their works from modification and destruction.[91] The significance of the artist's prerogative thus controls how the artwork is understood which is legally protected to a certain degree. Artworks are therefore allowed to move in a more or less unconstrained way, following the artist's creative license, regardless of convention. Notably, artists' moral rights are interpreted and implemented differently by legislation per nation. The significance of artists' rights legislation is that it recognizes artists' rights through creating a platform with established regulations and possibilities for discussion and protection of artist's intent. Curator Jan Schall goes so far as to stretch the artist's creative licence to include, in some instances, for artworks to be allowed to completely 'disappear without a trace.'[92] This notion becomes particularly pertinent for temporary artworks which, as supported by this thesis, should be allowed to completely physically disappear. However, the notion of letting a work vanish without a trace is problematic. As such, the notion of alternative traces are explored within this thesis.

Stakeholders rely on the artist to disclose additional information that cannot be read from the work's material alone, but must also be sensitive to factors which are introduced and which may change and influence the artist's understanding of their own work. These include considering when the artist's intent is recorded – right after the work is made or much later, whether the work behaves as the artist has anticipated, and being wary of not influencing the artist. Jill Sterret, Director of Collections and Conservation at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, notes 'the artist's intent is still our touchstone. But it shifts. You interview artists when their work first comes into the collection and then, years later, call for a clarification.'[93] For truly temporary artworks, there are of course no years.

[90] Jan Schall, 'Curating Ephemera: Responsibility and Reality,' *(Im)permanence: Cultures In/Out of Time*, ed., Judith Schachter and Stephen Brockmann (Pittsburgh: Center for the Arts in Society, 2008): 15–25; Margaret Hedstrom and Anna Perricci, 'It's Only Temporary,' *Mortality Immortality?: The Legacy of 20th-Century Art*, ed., Miguel Angel Corzo (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 1999): 26–40, 144; Windon, 2012.

[91] Ann M. Garfinkle et al., 'Art Conservation and the Legal Obligation to Preserve Artistic Intent', *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 36, no. 2 (Summer 1997), 166.

[92] Schall, 16.

[93] Jill Sterret, 'Competing Commitments: A Discussion about Ethical Dilemmas in the Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art', *The GCI Newsletter* 24, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 18–24, http://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications_resources/newsletters/24_2/dialogue.html,

The next section will consider the role of material more closely, looking specifically at its selection. Through clarifying the different ways in which materials are used, looking at examples of different artists using similarly vulnerable materials, it should become clear how material contributes to the biography of the artwork.

3.5 Material selection

Despite the ambiguity of material selection in our understanding of an artwork's longevity, material still tells us something about an artwork. This section offers a way of approaching the complex task of discerning the significance of material in the identity and experience of temporary artworks, and addresses how the selection of materials shapes a work, both literally and through the symbolic meaning it provides. First, art historian Rebecca Gordon's analysis of material as structure and signifier will be discussed and applied to the framework of temporary artworks. Gordon's analysis is developed in order to illustrate the significance of material selection in Kara Walker's *A Subtlety*, also known as *The Marvelous Sugar Baby: an homage to the unpaid and overworked artisans who have refined our sweet tastes from the cane fields to the kitchens of the New World on the occasion of the demolition of the Domino Sugar Refining Plant*, (2014).[94] *A Subtlety* (2014) illustrates how material influences the identity of a temporary artwork.

3.5.1 Material as structure or signifier

Rebecca Gordon introduces the idea of 'material as structure' and 'material as signifier' in her article 'Material significance in contemporary art'.[95] The notion of material as structure is developed from artists she has interviewed, whereas the term material as 'signifier' is developed from the ideas of earlier scholars whom Gordon acknowledges, including philosopher and semiotician Roland Barthes.[96] In his work 'Mythologies', Barthes develops linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's leading ideas on language and semiotics.[97] De Saussure proposed that language does not just give shape to communication, but also to the

(accessed March 11, 2015).

[94] The full title of the work is usually and will from hereon be abbreviated to *A Subtlety*.

[95] Rebecca Gordon, 'Material significance in contemporary art', *Art Matters: International Journal for Technical Art History*, 5 (2013).

[96] Roland Barthes, 'Rhetoric of the image', *Image, Music, Text*, ed. and transl., S. Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977): 32–51.

[97] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, transl., Annette Lavers (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux 1972).

world as we experience it.[98] Barthes applied de Saussure's framework of semiotics – the study of signs and sign processes in linguistics – to the reading of everyday material surrounding the individual. In essence, Barthes proposed that we use de Saussure's foundations to understand and read the meaning-making process of the man-made.

Barthes argued that the things around us are constructions which we read as signs. They consist of a signifier (that which is displayed) alongside the signified (the concept). Together, the signifier and the signified create a sign from which the viewer reads a particular message.[99] Barthes, significantly in discord with de Saussure, argued that the signifier is in fact already imbued with particular (non-arbitrary) meanings outside the signified. That is to say, certain signifiers cannot be separated from an intrinsic meaning.

Gordon builds her position using the terms used by the artists she interviews, notably the concept of 'material as structure'. Gordon uses 'material as structure' to describe 'those materials that carry with them no deliberate significance other than as the support for the expression'.[100] It refers to the material serving as scaffolding for the artwork, but not otherwise informing or shaping the artwork. Though, even as structure alone, material selection tells us something about a work's likely durational life. Material indicates possible problems, such as whether a work is physically vulnerable – the afore discussed inherent vice.

Gordon applies the term 'signifier' to explore how the artist invests meaning in the materials they select and use. She acknowledges the semiotic function of her terms as indebted to Barthes.[101] 'Material as signifier' is used to discuss 'the metaphorical significance of [the artist's selected] materials' and how they relate 'directly to what the artist intends to communicate through the work.'[102] Material can contribute to the aesthetic of the artwork, its reading and the work's concept, but might not do all of these things. For instance, in the case of an artwork where the material is foremost structure, such as for a traditional painting, it (the paint) will not inform the latter, the concept of the artwork. This relates as well to the ways in which more traditional artworks have been made, including oil painting and bronze sculpture – where the medium was not necessarily part of the work's message.

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[98] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed., Charles Bally and Ablbert Sechehaye (Chicago: Open Court, 1986).

[99] Roland Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms: critical Essays on Music, art, and Representation*, [originally published as *L'obvie et l'obtus*, 1982], transl., Richard Howard (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986), 185.

[100] Gordon 2013, 2.

[101] Barthes 1977.

[102] Ibid.

Yet the material means of articulation, whether intended as mere structure, or indeed signifier, nevertheless inevitably shapes what an artwork is able to say and how it is said. For a temporary artwork, the physical medium is not necessarily a practical end in itself, but rather also a vehicle for expression. Indeed, Gordon contends that the use of these binary terms is problematic as it risks, borrowing from art historian Tina Fiske's ideas and writing 'an oversimplified or bifurcated vocabulary'.[103] This is to say that material might not only function strictly as structure or signifier, as is the case with many temporary artworks. We must be cautious about seeing artworks in the limited framework of either/or. Nonetheless, the idea of 'material as structure' and 'material as signifier' remain useful in pointing towards the different layers through which material is used to give shape (in the widest sense) to an artwork.

3.5.2 Material as structure and signifier in temporary artworks

At the early stage of their lives, temporary artworks are transient objects. That is to say they contain a material component and are thus presented to the primary audience as an object, which over time is physically unmade. They might degrade naturally, or else an action might be imposed to further assist the process of material unmaking, but they always disappear. Temporary artworks are impermanent by design. This design, in adherence to the artist's intent, takes into account how an artwork is presented.

American artist Kara Walker's (b. 1969) recent monumental sugar sphinx, *A Subtlety* (2014), is seen to lie somewhere between the second category of artworks, those made out of fugitive or otherwise vulnerable materials which make the work wholly temporary, according to the artist's intent, and the third category, artworks made out of stable materials which are destroyed and become temporary nonetheless.

A Subtlety (2014) consisted of a larger than life sphinx-like woman made of bleached white sugar, situated in a former sugar refinery, and flanked by child-sized attendants – antebellum figures of slave boys, some made in resin and coated in molasses, and a few cast solely out of sugar.[104] The sugar forms the clear structure of the works, but is imbued with symbolism which relates to the narrative of slave trade in sugar plantation.

[103] Tina Fiske, 'Authenticities and the contemporary artwork, or between stone and water', *VDR Beiträge zur Erhaltung von Kunst- und Kulturgut*, 2, (2006): 34–9, 36.

[104] Walker's body of work revisits a history of violence and colour through what Gwendolyn Dubois Shaw describes as 'an artistic process of racialized signification' engaging with and portraying the history of African-American slavery. Gwendolyn Dubois Shaw, *Seeing the Unspeakable: The art of Kara Walker*, (Durham, NC: Duke Univeristy Press, 2005), 5.

Figure 3-4 Kara Walker, A Subtlety, 2014, styrofoam core and 30 tons of sugar, 75 feet long by 35 feet tall. Domino Sugar Factory in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Photography by Jason Wyche. Image courtesy of Creative Time.

Walker's art is entrenched in themes of power, destruction and loss, playing on the multiplicitous character of these themes. Loss as a physical characteristic of the work furthermore takes on a political character, in which the significance of the material the artist is working with, sugar, collected and refined by black bodies, and the vulnerability and ultimate destruction of these sugar bodies makes visual and apparent the uncomfortable history of the sugar trade. The material, molded sugar, and its shaping into the figures of young boys, forms a comment on the money and power gained from the frail bodies handling this trade, and the subsequent tragedies. This storyline is made all the more palpable as the boys made solely out of sugar grew increasingly gaunt and disfigured until they simply melted away towards the end of the show. The work was commissioned for the non-profit arts organisation *Creative Time*, and installed at the former Domino Sugar factory in Brooklyn, New York, between May and July 2014. *A Subtlety* (2014) was influenced by Walker's reading of Sidney W. Mintz' tome 'Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History.'[105]

[105] Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*, (New York: Viking Press, 1985).

Figure 3-5 Kara Walker, *A Subtlety*, 2014. Domino Sugar Factory in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Photography by Jason Wyche. Image courtesy of Jennifer Deppe Parker.

A Subtlety (2014) speaks about race through colour (the brown boys made of molasses surrounding the bleached sphinx made out of refined sugar for white Western consumption), while the sweetness and sensuality darkly gives literal shape and narrates the figures carved out of it, speaking about of the usability of black bodies and Western appetites. Walker has described the whole installation as 'not necessarily landmark by plank but landmark by memory and by the re-telling of residents and visitors who bore witness to her arrival and departure.'[106] *A Subtlety* (2014) was dismantled and discarded after the duration of the exhibition, save for the Sphinx's left hand, which the artist has retained. The work as a whole lives on through those who have seen it first-hand, their experiences passed on, alongside the artist's and commissioning body's documentation, so that the work may continue to live on in its material absence.

The significance of the material selection relates furthermore to the space in which the work was situated, a sugar refinery, as well as to the subject of the work: black slavery. Notably, sugar in itself does not tell this story alone. The narrative of the works, what the material signifies, is related to how the material is used and what the artist shapes with it.

[106] Antwaun Sargent, 'Interview: Kara Walker Decodes Her New World Sphinx at Domino Sugar Factory', *Complex Art + Design* (May 2014), http://www.complex.com/art-design/2014/05/kara-walker-interview, (accessed March 4, 2015).

3.5.3 Material selection shapes the identity of the artwork

Walker uses sugar as a comment on the location in which the work is situated: a former sugar factory, as well as to further play upon the subject of the work, namely slavery in the sugar trade. *A Subtlety* (2014) signifies larger narratives which are embodied by the symbolism of the material selected. However, sugar also provides the physical structure for the work. After *A Subtlety* (2014) was unmade through natural weathering and eventual dismantling, the absence of the structure became emblematic of the lost work and has continued to function in unison with the material's meaning. A temporary artwork's material, as *A Subtlety* (2014) illustrates, can therefore be read as *both* structure and signifier in its presence, *and also* in its absence. Thus understanding the material, how it held the physical sculptures together, but also what meanings the artist ascribed to it. The meaning is derived not only from the artwork and its material, but also from the context of the artwork – most notably even when there is no permanent object.[107]

In order to address material and its role within an artwork, the *Stichting Behoud Moderne Kunst* (SBMK), which is the Dutch Foundation for the Conservation of Contemporary Art, has produced a decision-making model for the conservation and restoration of modern and contemporary art. The model was presented at the symposium *Modern Art: Who Cares?* in 1977, and as yet it has not been superseded by another model. The model (see Figure 3.6) highlights the importance of understanding meaning, which they describe as follows:

> The meaning of a work, however, is layered and certainly not unambiguous. One can speak of meaning imparted by the artist, but also by a context (criticism, group, style, time), by a place (collection, country, 'site-specific'), or event (performance). In addition, the choice of material and working method has consequences for the meaning of the work. Finally there are also ideological (political, philosophical and religious) layers of meaning.[108]

[107] Martha Buskirk, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (London: MIT, 2003), 25.

[108] SBMK, The Decision-Making Model for the Conservation and Restoration of Modern and Contemporary Art, 7, http://www.sbmk.nl/uploads/decision-making-model.pdf, (accessed March 4, 2015).

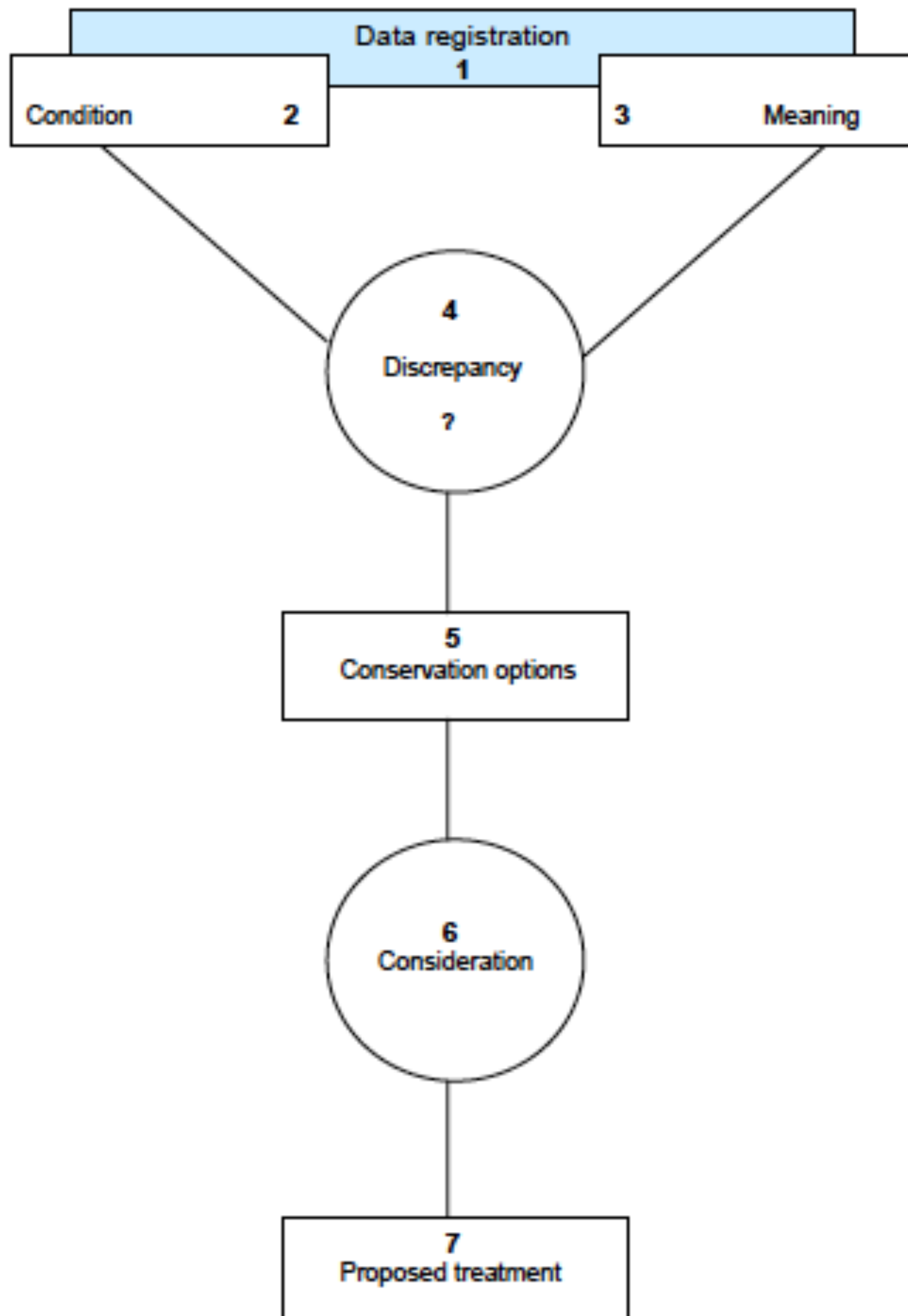

Figure 3-6 Diagram: Decision-making Model for the Conservation and Restoration of Modern Art. © Foundation for the Conservation of Modern Art.

Material identity, as discussed in the following section, is found not only through the selection of material, but meaning also lies in the process of material unmaking, also discussed further on in this chapter. In the case of Walker, it is a combined process of allowing the sugar to melt during the exhibition – the audience bearing witness – and eventually having the installation dismantled outside the public eye. The significance of

this material unmaking lies in the works' courting its inevitable loss and ultimately in how the performance of loss plays out in the minds of those present and those who hear about it later.[109]

3.6 Material unmaking

The temporary artworks investigated in this thesis are created with their loss in mind. Their material is both structure and signifier, because of the significance of both material selection and material unmaking. In this sense, borrowing from philosopher and communication theorist Marshall McLuhan, 'the medium is the message.'[110] McLuhan was active in communication theory, but his overall postulation, that a medium actively shapes how a message is received, has been applied increasingly to other fields, including arts practice. The significance of McLuhan's statement is inadvertently reiterated by conservator Christian Scheidemann in his essay 'Material as Language in Contemporary Art' where the selection of material and its application are seen as critical elements to reading and understanding the artwork as a whole.[111] Within temporary artworks, the process of physical unmaking directs both the work and our attention as viewers, creating a tension.

Material unmaking, meaning the change the material undergoes either due to its inherent properties or else through its construction and subsequent action tell us something about an artwork and shape an artwork's overall message and experience. All materials move and act to a certain degree; no physical material is completely stable. However, what sets temporary artworks apart from traditional artworks is that this material change is welcomed and applied intentionally by the artist. This is certainly the case for artworks which fall under the afore-discussed second category, namely those that are made out of fugitive or otherwise vulnerable materials which make the work as a whole temporary, in accordance with the artist's intent. Artist Anya Gallaccio, whose work opens this thesis, has created many works in this vein, including *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996). Gallaccio welcomed the ice sculpture's melting and intensified the process by creating a core of salt within the sculpture.

Preserving temporary artworks involves more than preserving their materials; it necessitates opening up dialogue about the significance of the material unmaking, and the

[109] Chapter 5 specifically develops the idea that temporary artworks functions as performances of loss.

[110] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1994).

[111] Christian Scheidemann, 'Material as Language in Contemporary Art', *The Lure of the Object*, ed., Stephen Melville (Dalton: Studley Press, 2005), 77.

artist's intent.[112] As discussed by Chiantore and Rava,

> The deterioration of materials is sometimes an integral part of a language that the artist uses accordingly to his or her own sensibility and perception of phenomena and should thus be respected and maintained even though its development needs to be monitored.[113]

Walker's *A Subtlety* (2014) highlights the importance of how the material reading of the artwork can cross over into being structure and signifier. The lost boys are in fact not stand-alone pieces, but rather function as elements of the larger one-off installation. However, their critical material destruction within the piece warrants a closer look, because it teases out the significance of the artist's engagement with the conscious employment of material unmaking. The sugar slave boys that melt away are interesting precisely because they touch upon poignant stories of loss encapsulated through material loss. On the surface we are faced with the physical material that degrades, however this act of material destruction echoes the narrative represented, and the loss of actual children, which refers to a larger historical truth. The melting sugar is a vehicle for opening a bigger discussion, which after its loss can be traced only through the experience and memories of those present who have seen the work, and any lingering documentation. The significance of Walker's creative commentary and the narrative she is building with her work is made more palpable through the work's disintegration and irretrievability, as encapsulated by the lost boys. Through their material loss, these types of works cease to be stable objects which can be commodified and stored, and instead make a larger context visible.[114] They become experiences.

3.7 The different stakeholders and their role in (re)visiting temporary artworks

As temporary artworks change and decisions are made which impact how they are to be experienced, the interests of different stakeholders become more pronounced. Pragmatically, the explicit stakeholders are the artist, the conservator, the curator, the collector, and the audience.[115] The audience is not always seen as an explicit stakeholder.

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[112] Scheidemann 2005, 84.

[113] Chiantore and Rava, 37.

[114] Charles Esche, 'The Politics of Collecting within the Possible Museum', Plenary Lecture at Contemporary Art: Who Cares? Held 9 – 11 June 2010, Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, http://www.incca.org/cawc-programme/day-1/630-charles-esche, (accessed July 5, 2015).

[115] These are the foremost stakeholders addressed and acknowledged within the SBMK report of the symposium *Contemporary Art: Who Cares?,* http://www.sbmk.nl/uploads/cawc04_08_2011_163325.pdf, (accessed May 8, 2015).

However, the audience, both present and future, is qualified as a stakeholder within this research. The various stakeholders may have different priorities and interests when addressing an artwork; these include the integrity of the work, its safekeeping, correct display, collectability, and how to access and experience the work. It should be noted that these interests will at times overlap, and all these interests are interrelated with the primary issue of understanding where the essence of an artwork lies. We can explore the roles of the various stakeholders more carefully when applying them to a particular example, in order to illustrate their different interests. Specifically, I will examine them in relation to Scotland-based, English artist Richard Wright's (b. 1960) submission for the 2009 Turner Prize, *No Title* (Wall Painting). This work won the coveted prize, and has served as an inspiration, as well as a critical starting point for this research.

Figure 3-7 Richard Wright, *No Title* (Wall Painting), 2009, Tate Britain, London. Image courtesy of Glenn Copus.

Wright, who is still working, makes site-specific paintings, which he paints directly onto walls, ceilings and floors, as well as drawings and prints. Many of the paintings exist on a temporary basis; they are painted once and after their intended duration painted over, leaving no visible trace. Wright's winning submission to the 2009 Turner Prize, *No Title* (Wall Painting) (2009), consisted of a large mural created with the use of traditional fresco techniques embellished with gold leaf. The work took a labour-intensive four weeks to make. Unusually, the work was both the jury and the audience's favourite, but in spite of its popularity, the work was not intended to last and therefore did not.

The nature of Wright's technique and application of pattern, as well as location of the work, asks viewers to come close and take notice of the work – to really look. The knowledge of the work's impermanence further heightens the audience's engagement and experience of the work. Wright commented on this aspect of his work in an interview, stating, 'I am interested in placing painting in the situation where it collides with the world; the fragility of that existence. Being here for a short period of time, I feel, heightens the experience of it being here.'[116] As Wright creates works on surfaces which are directly painted over after the temporary paintings' intended duration, their long-term lifespan is clearly jeopardised. These limitations impact how, and by how many people, a work by Wright is seen and experienced first-hand. This is significant and a conscious part of the artist's working methodology, as he explains, ' the fragility of the experience is the hinge for me.[117] A more durable work would have a different impact on its environment and audience, as it would remove the tension produced by the work's impending finality. As such the artist frames his work on its location, the aspect of surprise, and duration.

Wright's oeuvre captures the ambiguity of material duration and the difficulty of stewarding these types of works into the future, and the ensuing questions which lie at the heart of this thesis. The work's defined limited duration is part of what shapes it, and yet this complicates trying to create a possible future for the work. The artist talks about putting painting in a position where 'there is a problem for it to survive.'[118] The fate of Wright's works is that by and large they do not survive, at least not in their original material state. The material objects – the paintings – are lost. The complicit temporary nature puts the work, as the artist acknowledges, in an unstable and problematic position.[119] Wright discusses this as a conscious challenge to the marketability of his art.[120] This makes it more difficult for the art market to absorb the work. As a consequence, the artist notes that rather than placing the artwork in the future, it firmly plants it in the present. 'It's for now,' Wright has stated.[121]

Moreover, the paintings as transient objects indicate that the act of painting on the wall is in fact only part of the work. The artist's works as a whole serve as a means of

[116]David Sillito, 'Artist Wright wins Turner Prize', *BBC News,* (7 December 2009), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/8399111.stm, (accessed May 12, 2015).

[117]'Richard Wright', *Generation: 25 Years of Contemporary Art in Scotland*, http://generationartscotland.org/artists/richard-wright/, (accessed May 12, 2015).

[118] Tate Videos, 2009, Richard Wright - Turner Prize 2009, available from: http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/richard-wright-turner-prize-2009 (accessed May 12, 2015), screen time 00.15 sec.

[119] Ibid, screen time 1.15.

[120] Ibid, screen time 2.13.

[121] Ibid, screen time 2. 26.

entering into a conversation about space.[122] Wright's work engages with space and perception, again asking the viewers to look and take notice and inhabit the space they are in. Arguably, this conversation with space continues even after the work is physically gone. Though whether the work is allowed to completely disappear is questionable, despite the artist's intentions.

In today's smartphone age, leaving nothing behind seems improbable. Contemporary art audiences make their own souvenirs. However, these traces made and left behind by primary audiences are part of the artwork's legacy, and part of its inevitable mode of survival. In terms of legacy, the artist explicitly states: 'I like the idea of there being nothing left when I am gone', adding, 'If something is really important enough, it will survive.'[123] As such it is interesting to think of whether the act of documentation, especially unofficial documentation made by visitors represents a conflict of interest between the audience and the artist, or rather is an acceptable means of the work's survival. To a certain extent the work's survival is made possible through the amount of documentation left in its wake; this becomes a means of investing in the work. Although *No Title* (Wall Painting) (2009) has ceased to exist physically, it can be recalled hundreds of times through different sources, which have collected images of the work made by different stakeholders. These images are not the work itself, but they bear witness to part of what the work was, indicating what it looked like and how people interacted with it. They present fragments which frame encounters and experiences and enable a secondary audience, which can interpret and experience the work for the first time.

Works, such as *No Title* (Wall Painting) (2009), should be known to future audiences as part of the canons of art history and creative practice. These works' originality as well as the questions raised by their complex nature make them both timeless and urgent, which is precisely why an investment should be made into finding a means of furthering durational engagement after the work has physically ceased to be.

None of the temporary artworks discussed here exist in their original material form. Anya Gallaccio's *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996) melted. Tawny Kerr's *Lemon Chandelier* (2012) was dismantled and discarded, save for a single strand. Anna Schuleit's *Bloom* (2003) was uninstalled and the flowers and sod were donated to psychiatric hospitals, general hospitals, half-way houses and homeless shelters throughout New England. Kara Walker's *A Subtlety* (2014) melted and what was left was dismantled, with the artist keeping the Sphinx' left hand.

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[122] Ibid, screen time 00.29.

[123] Ibid, screen time 2.51.

Returning to Wright's work specifically, the artist is the sole primary audience for his entire body of works. He is the only individual who has been able to have a first-hand experience of his full body of works, as many of Wright's works no longer physically exist in their original material form. The works which have disappeared can therefore no longer be (re)visited in any traditional sense, and new first-hand experiences are no longer possible. However, for the purpose of trying to pragmatically engage and begin to answer the questions asked in this research, let's imagine how a retrospective of Wright's temporary works might look. The clear constraints include that we cannot directly recreate the works. Temporary artworks occur in real time. Temporary artworks which have disappeared can be revisited only in memory – which means you had to be there – or documentation. Accordingly, memory and documentation are the tools we can use to revisit the artist's works.

If Wright's works are also about how we engage with space, although the physical works may no longer exist, the spaces with which the works have interacted in many cases most likely still do exist. Moreover, there will also still be primary audiences who saw the works first-hand. And of course, at present, the artist is still accessible. In trying to form a retrospective of Wright's body of work, this would have to be developed from what remains. This could include some of the spaces where Wright's works were situated, as well as accounts from some of the stakeholders who witnessed the works first-hand, including the artist, the curator, and audience members. In terms of what the retrospective would look like, it is proposed is that in some of the spaces which formerly housed the work, we would find a display of diverse accounts, preferably made by various stakeholders and in different formats – photographs, video, sound, together culminating and presenting a range of impressions of the works. This would present future audiences visiting the retrospective with a dynamic sense of what Wright's works were and how they affected different people. The retrospective would not (re)create the works, but rather present the relationship that different stakeholders had with the works and how they experienced them. It would be clear that the artworks no longer existed in their original material state and were not present, but nevertheless still manage to contextualise them.

In essence, a retrospective of temporary artworks that no longer exist, such as many of Wright's works, proposes that conservation theory merges and situates itself within post-structuralist thought, moving from the sole interest of the author, in this case the artist and his/her intent, and beginning to incorporate the birth of the reader, in this case the input and experience of the audience. If temporary artworks are understood as experiences, the experiences of all stakeholders, including the audience, should be taken into account. The artist, though still important, is not the sole authority for the artwork's legacy. Temporary

artworks in particular engage with the notion that the identity and understanding of an artwork are fluid. The full context reveals the artwork. Therefore, it follows that providing a wide range of varied documentation from diverse sources would provide a fuller context from which the work could be read, enabling new audiences to get closer to the lost material work.

The best way to understand the temporary artwork after it is gone is to contextualise what the work was, and critically, to see what it is now, in its absence, as later audiences encounter the work. The point at which the work is seen, after its material fact, is a different vantage point from which to understand and experience the artwork. Just as the individual primary audience will have varied experiences of the artwork, the same applies to the secondary audience. Each individual viewer will bring their own input to the work, and this will shape their experience. In this sense an artwork will be experienced slightly differently for each viewer. Additionally, future audiences' perceptions of a lost temporary artwork will be framed by the manner in which they encounter the work, i.e. by the fragments which represent it. Instead of seeing an artwork which has ceased to physically exist, these fragments become a manner of recalling the work and lead to accepting new interpretations and experiences of it. This is the significant compromise that is made when trying to conserve a temporary artwork – we cannot conserve the physical object due to the clear constraints – but we can try to find a means of coming close to the material object, while understanding that what is presented is not the same thing. This is the closest solution possible for the conceptual heterodox of trying to conserve the ephemeral.

3.8 Contemporary conservation's approach for temporary artworks

Contemporary conservation practice has shifted from focusing and working with tangible objects. Whereas Muñoz-Viñas argues that this shift, represented by working on intangible artefacts dilutes the effectiveness of conservators; I am inclined to disagree.[124] There is a need for different approaches within conservation to cope with the needs of works being addressed. This does not render conservation theory and practice obsolete, but rather challenges it to adapt. As ephemeral practices, including the practice of creating temporary artworks, become more common in both commissioned and collected works (even the most improbable works, or fragments of them, find themselves in collections), it is inevitable that conservators must deal with such works.

[124] Muñoz-Viñas 2005.

Very pragmatically, those in the profession of caring for artworks, be it conservators or collectors, or indeed art historians, need to consider what the artwork in question is, and what it becomes after it is no longer physically present. If an artwork is indeed a conversation with space and the art audience, the space the work has interacted with persists, along with the art audience, even after the physical work is gone. These become two points where we can begin to locate a lost artwork.

In any discussion of perishable artworks, Swiss artist Dieter Roth's (b. 1930 - 1998) work and vision must be considered, given his forward and experimental use of foodstuffs as artistic materials and his advocacy of material decay as a medium in artistic practice. Roth worked with various mediums; he was a poet, graphic artist and sculptor – some of his most noted works, and those most interesting for this research, are the *Insel* (Island) series (1968), due to their highly perishable nature. These works lie in a somewhat undefined space, as they are not wholly temporary artworks, but also certainly not stable long-lived works either. They are discussed here as they illustrate the difficulties posed by temporary artworks and the artist's clear instructions on how to cope with the works' inevitable change and partial demise.

In 1968, Roth was commissioned by the Swiss advertising agency GGK to create a small work for each of the firm's 120 employees as that year's Christmas gift. The firm had anticipated that Roth would produce something fairly traditional, such as small drawings or graphics, as the artist was a known draftsman. Instead, Roth produced 120 variations of *Kleinen Inseln* (small islands). The 'small islands' consisted of small wooden panels painted blue, each topped with a mound made of various unusual materials including a mixture of yoghurt, plaster and other materials the artist had lying around. The blue represented the ocean and the soon-to-be-decaying mounds were the imagined land.

This series of works was a celebration of the biodegradable force of its materials. As discussed by curator Theodora Vischer, 'the *Kleinen Inseln* thus became microcosms, *pars pro toto* embodiments of the fate of all living things'.[125] Through the works' inevitable material undoing, Roth develops what art historian and philosopher Arthur Danto describes as a grunge type of aesthetic.[126] Decay was very much anticipated and encouraged by the artist and served a distinct ornamental as well as theoretical function in these works. The volatile nature of the organic materials consciously contributed to the works. As curator Sarah Suzuki explains, 'food products enabled [Roth] to incorporate into

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[125] Theodora Vischer, 'Islands', *Roth time: A Dieter Roth Retrospective* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, and Baden: Lars Muller Publishers, Baden, 2003),106.
[126] Arthur C. Danto, 'Kalliphobia in Contemporary Art', *Art Journal* Vol. 63 No. 2 (Summer, 2004).

his art two of the basic elements of nature: time and biodeterioration.'[127]

Due to the intentionality at play, Roth was very much opposed to any type of intervention with his works. Roth's opposition to intervention extended to preservation. '…Don't restore anything! Please!' Roth pleaded.[128] The hands-off approach the artist demanded for his works problematized their longevity, as with time the works inevitably (partially) rotted away. As the various edibles decayed, the islands' landscape would eventually come to a halt where only the relatively stable materials, such as the plaster and screws, remained present. However, the focus of the works was very much on their process of decay, embracing a Fluxus-like ideal of transience. As clarified by conservator Heide Skowranek, 'it is less the result and more the continuing genesis of the work—its change and deformation through to decay—that is of importance.'[129] The artist anticipated the inevitable material destruction of the work and used this to shape it. Again, as seen with previous works which illustrate the problems of temporality, the works were evidently more than the sum of their parts, and change could be seen as a necessary part of the works as a whole.

As far as trying to reconfigure the process of rot and decay, which is where much of the 'life' of the island works is situated, Roth clearly stated, 'photography can take the place of restoration'.[130] Documentation thus became the artist-endorsed means for conserving the work and carrying it forward. Accordingly, this informs the possibilities and decisions a conservator will make when approaching a work by the artist. In following the instructions stated by the artist, the conservator is able to address the specific framework which constructs the work's meaning and through which it is realised as a work of art. For works such as Roth's, documentation provides a clear means of carrying aspects of artworks forward without fully compromising the work's need to physically change. As a result, documentation has become an acceptable tool in conservation practice to combat complete visual loss without having to circumvent material obsolescence. Boldly, it has been stated that 'Dieter Roth is the father of modern conservation.'[131] Though this thesis

[127] Sarah Suzuki, *Wait, Later This Will Be Nothing: Editions by Dieter Roth* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2013), 87.

[128] Vischer, 107.

[129] *Dieter Roth: Bilder, Zeichnungen, Objekte*, discussion with Hans-Joachim Müller (Basel: Galerie Littmann, 1989), n.p., in Heide Skrowranek, 'Should We Reproduce the Beauty of Decay? A *Museumsleben* in the work of Dieter Roth', *Tate Papers* (Autumn 2007), http://www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/tatepapers/07autumn/skowranek.htm, (accessed December 2, 2013).

[130] Skrowranek.

[131] Andrew M. Goldstein, 'MoMA Curator Sarah Suzuki on How Dieter Roth Invented the Artist's Book', *Artspace* (June 20, 2013),

would not wholly support the notion that Roth is the sole propeller catalyzing the changes we have seen in modern and contemporary art conservation, it is undeniable that Roth and his contemporaries, such as fellow artist Joseph Beuys, working with equally ephemeral matter, form part of a later *avant-garde* which set a path towards new ways of shaping art and which made parallel calls for new ways of thinking about conservation. In this sense, Roth is undeniably, as Suzuki discusses his role, an early link in the chain of artists who used non-traditional materials to make art, which have nevertheless found their ways into collections in one form or another.[132] This is the ironic nature of ephemeral and temporary artworks. Despite their seeming implausible possibilities for survival, traces of non-traditional works can still be found in collections.

3.8.1 Conservation through documentation

The legacy of temporary artworks in current conservation practice is sustained through documentation. All of the works discussed in this thesis can become known through the documents left in their wake, and it is indeed through these documents that I have come to know many of these works. We live in a culture in which audiences are constantly provided with secondary mediated information, where many lost works are encountered through documented traces, as the original material work has not survived. This thesis goes so far as to state that documentation inevitably serves as a form of conservation. However, the type of, and contextualisation of, documentation critically impacts the reading for the audience. The original proposal of this thesis is the manner in which documentation, alongside memory (the latter discussed in more detail in Chapter 5), are used to contextualise the absence of a material artwork. Specifically, I develop the claim that the conservation of temporary artworks should be a strategy which through the use of memory and documentation manages to preserve a performance of loss alongside providing a contextualization and presentation of the unmade material artwork's absence.

3.8.2 The document

Documentation lends itself as a non-invasive means of recording an object. A document can be understood as 'A piece of written, printed, or electronic matter that provides information or evidence or that serves as an official record.'[133] When discussing

http://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews_features/moma_curator_sarah_suzuki_dieter_roth_interview, (accessed May 10, 2015).

[132] Ibid.

[133] 'Document,' *Oxford Dictionaries* 2015.

documentation in the context of this thesis, this refers to any means through which temporary artworks have been recorded or facets of them have been captured. A document can exist in an array of media, including photography, video, and writing, all of which have their merits and also possible disadvantages. The most notable characteristic shared by all forms of documentation is that they frame a singular perspective, capturing only a fragment of an artwork. Nonetheless, contemporary conservators, such as Chiantore and Rava, advocate that temporary works – those which are transitory and cannot be replaced – are to be carried forward through their documentation and what might remain of the artist's plans and writing.[134] Complete documentation is critical in order to understand what conservator Carol Stringari refers to as, 'the original context,' but also to avoid future misinterpretation and neglect.[135]

How we understand the document depends in part on who has made the document and for what purpose. Different stakeholders document with diverse goals in mind. In the case of Dutch artist Voebe de Gruyter (b. 1960), whose works are often temporary, but which the artist documents, 'the documentation is not part of the work and should never be viewed as such.'[136] In such instances it is especially important to acknowledge the artist's understanding of their documentation and how this documentation is presented and made accessible to future audiences. However, increasingly other stakeholders often also document the work. For instance, art critic Louisa Buck and art consultant Daniel MacLean emphasise that it is in the interest of the commissioner (who might be the curator or collector) to document the full work, as this may be the sole way through which it can continue to exist.[137] Moreover, the audience often also documents works they witness in one form or another.

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http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/document, (accessed March 14, 2015).

[134] Chiantore and Rava, 168.

[135] Carol Stringari, 'Installations and Problems of Preservation', *Modern Art: Who Cares? An Interdisciplinary Research Project and an International Symposium on the Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art*, ed., IJsbrand Hummelen and Dionne Sillé, (London: Archetype Publications, 1999): 259 – 262, 272.

[136] Erma Hermens, 'Proceedings Group II [in Working with artists in order to preserve original intent]', *Modern Art: Who Cares? An Interdisciplinary Research Project and an International Symposium on the Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art*, ed., IJsbrand Hummelen and Dionne Sillé (London: Archetype Publications, 1999): 259 – 262, 398.

[137] Louisa Buck and Daniel McClean, *Commissioning Contemporary Art: A Handbook for curators, collectors, and artists* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2012), 255.

3.8.3 The purpose

First and foremost, the purpose of documenting the temporary artwork very much depends on who is documenting the work. However, in broad lines it can be said that we document temporary artworks in order to capture our encounter, to capture the object's transition, and in part as a final measure to represent the artwork with the foresight that the material work will cease to exist. Documenting a temporary artwork, in all of these instances, becomes a preventive measure against having to let go of the work completely. It mitigates complete reliance on the primary audience's experience and subsequent memory. It becomes an additional means of presenting the unmade artwork to future audiences who were unable to experience the artwork first-hand. The document, at its core, records for posterity. In doing so, it functions as the mediator in what artist and theorist Paul Stapleton describes as 'the dichotomy of preservation and disappearance.'[138]

In order to conserve temporary artworks for future audiences, a balance needs to be found between a work's material disappearance and the act of trying to save the work. This raises questions of what value there might be in doing this. Why save temporary artworks at all, if it is both complicated and potentially against the ethos of the work? There are different answers and different advocates. Certain artists, such as Tino Sehgal, are vehemently opposed to their works lasting in any form, whereas others might be more inclined to collaborate and find a means of discussing the future of their works, if not through material mitigation, through documentation.

In conservation, a document is presented as something between a fragment and a representation of a temporary artwork after it is gone. It is the physical residue which demonstrates that something once existed and begins to contextualise what it was, while bringing the work and the event to the forefront for a non-primary audience. A document can become a means of presenting the spirit of the work itself, to give future audiences a sense of what is no longer there, and above all, to bring to their attention that there was a work which is no longer present. A document, as a record, thus makes the continuation of the temporary artwork viable, and gives it a place in the canons of creative practice, when the work itself is no longer there.

3.8.4 The problem

A document can be used to clarify a temporary artwork, to record that something was there, and as a fragment of the work, represent part of the context which situates the work.

[138] Stapleton.

As raised in 'Mortality Immortality? The Legacy of 20th-Century Art' (1998), '[we come to] understand our past through fragments – fragments of objects and fragments of information.'[139] However, a document can also, when incorrectly framed, and not posited clearly as a fragment, obscure its relationship to the artwork as a whole and mistakenly take over, replace, and become misconstrued as the artwork.

Performance historian Heike Roms, whose scholarship is concerned with legacy, and notably how the fragments that survive help sustain the legacy of 'the live', is of particular relevance in this discussion. Roms discusses the issue of 'in-betweenness' which she posits as the transformation or the gap that exists between documents and performance.[140] As such Roms broaches the core issue of how documents are used to carry forward things which no longer exist. Specifically, this forces the question of how we understand the indexical relationship between a document and an artwork.

A document is not the same as a temporary artwork. This distinction is critical, as the framing of the relationship between the two impacts how both are understood and experienced. As art historian Bernard Berenson critically notes, 'all that remains of an event in general history is the account of it in document or tradition; but in art, the work of art itself is the event.'[141]

The problem with creating the enduringly ephemeral, is that a temporary artwork's endurance separates the work from one of the essential features which informs and shapes the original artwork to begin with: its temporariness. This raises the question of whether, in mitigating a temporary artwork's temporariness, we in fact disassociate the work from its primary characteristic, thereby altering how the work is understood and experienced by future audiences. Art historian Martha Buskirk addresses the significance of how we come to know the artwork, stating the following:

> So we have works that are about immediacy of experience accomplished through the direct presence of the body, but an immediacy that has to be imagined through the mediation of accounts and documents. The more immediate, the more ephemeral, the more of-the-moment or of-the-place the work is, the more likely that it is known through images and accounts, the two sometimes working

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[139] Ibid.

[140] Heike Roms, 'Archiving Legacies: Who Cares For Performance Remains?', *Performing Archives/Archives of Performance*, ed. Gunhild Borggreen & Rune Gade, (University of Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2013), 11.

[141] Bernard Berenson, 'Rudiments of Connoisseurship', *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*, ed., Nicholas Stanley Price, Mansfield Kirby Talley,,and Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro (Los Angelos: Getty Conservation Institute, 1996).

together, sometimes in isolation from one another.[142]

Buskirk eloquently brings to light the inevitable problematic relationship between a document and a temporary moment. A document can recall the moment, but at the same time must be remembered to be separate. As it is not always clear how a document relates to a moment, it has the potential to obfuscate the viewer's understanding and experience of the temporary work. There needs to be clear transparency informing the viewer exactly what they are looking at – what does the fragment represent – how does it mediate and inform the experience that it stages without the material artwork?

When we document artworks, temporary artworks in particular, we need to consider what the document is. This varies depending on who makes the document – the artist, their assistants, the curator, a collector, or a member of the primary audience. What the document represents and how it is seen in relationship to the original material artwork also varies. The document could be part of the artwork, or a representation of the work or a recording for archival purposes. These differences are important as they frame how a document and in turn an artwork are understood and experienced. Particularly in an age when documentation has become standard practice within conservation practices, the meaning configured to documents matters.

However, if a document is not the artwork, and the relationship between the two is clarified, a document such as a photograph can also clarify the absence of the material object. According to performance art historian Amelia Jones, liveness stresses the modernist dream of immediacy.[143] This liveness and presence is made evident through the document due to its exact absence. As Jones argues, through documentation, future generations bear witness to '"presence" *in absentia*'.[144] In application to temporary artworks specifically, this means that documentation makes evident that which is missing, the material object. Through documentation, future audiences thus garner what has been lost, the physical object. As such they too can experience loss, a critical theme within temporary artworks, in this case the loss of the material. It is through the mediated experience that, as artist Jane Dorn explains 'I see evidence of absence through the presence of what remains.'[145] Essayist Susan Sontag pushes this notion further, stating:

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[142] Martha Buskirk, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2003), 223.

[143] Amelia Jones, '"Presence" in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation', *Art Journal*, Vol. 56, No. 4, Performance Art: (Some) Theory and (Selected) Practice at the End of This Century (Winter, 1997): 11-18, 18.

[144] Ibid.

[145] This quote comes from correspondence the artist had wit Maria Popova, part of which were published in 'The Presence of Absence: Jane Dorn's Haunting Photographs of Abandoned Buildings in the South', http://www.brainpickings.org/2014/04/03/jane-dorn-photography/, (accessed May 3, 2015).

> All photographs are *memento mori*. To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt.'[146]

The inevitable nature of temporary artworks is that their continued careers are as something else. A temporary artwork's absence is part of its trajectory and it is precisely this absence which forms part of the key to its continuation. The idea of the artwork's trajectory is borrowed from sociologist and philosophers Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe, who propose that rather than focus on a singular original entity, we understand the work as 'the whole assemblage made up of one – or several – original(s) together with the retinue of its continually re-written biography'.[147]

As such, I propose that different kinds of documentation, meaning different mediums, but also documents made by different stakeholders, can be used together to present relationships to a physical work that no longer exists, and to project experiences into the future and enable new audiences to engage with the lost work in this manner. The document is not the temporary artwork, and cannot be used to replace the artwork. Rather, it is an indication that there was a physical work which no longer exists and which someone experienced. The document as such is a tool that speaks of the lost material work and becomes a vehicle for continuing this loss.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter is intended to deepen the understanding of the complex material identities of temporary artworks as a prerequisite to the process of thinking about practices of care for these works. Conservators Salvatore Lorusso et al. maintain that in considering treatment for an artwork, 'One must employ a methodology based on the critical study of not only the materials used, but also the philosophy and creative conceptual intentions of the artist.'[148] Temporary artworks can be made out of traditional materials which include but are not limited to: clay, wood, oil paint, as well as the non-traditional, including for example: perishables, fat, flowers, twigs, ice, blood, excrement, and cardboard. Knowledge is needed not only of the material, but also of the artist's philosophy behind using and

[146] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* [1973] (London: Picador, 2001).

[147] Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe, 'The migration of the aura, or How to explore the original through its fac similes', *Switching codes: Thinking Through Digital Technology in the Humanities and the Arts*, ed., Thomas Bartscherer and Roderick Coover (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

[148] Salvatore Lorusso et al., 'The Traditional, The Innovative, The Ephemeral: Conception, realization, intervention in contemporary art', *Conservation Science in Cultural Heritage*, Vol. 9 (Mar. 2009,): 170-214.

applying the material. Where possible this requires direct input from the artist, or else from the artist's associates who can clarify the artist's intention. The questions asked here unravel the layers which make up a temporary artwork and support its framework, and help to clarify how we might see the complete artwork in all its fullness – in essence, they help us to discern the identity of a temporary artwork. These questions include: Is the work a temporary artwork? What is the artist's intent? What is the role of the material selected and the manner in which it assists to simultaneously make and unmake the physical work?

Parallel to questions around material identity and its role within an artwork, the brief history of conservation provided illustrates that contemporary art conservation is a fluid and dynamic practice evolving alongside and according to the needs of the artworks of its time. Fluid and dynamic are applied here to denote the growth that conservation has undergone and the expansion of theory and practice that has come be considered part of conservation practice. In order to cope with the requirements which frame temporary artworks, namely singular material embodiment and material unmaking, the current conservation approach involves lengthy documentation of the artwork in order to record an artwork for posterity.

There is a perceptual, phenomenological and aesthetic shift between a document and a temporary artwork as a whole which presents problems with regard to how both are understood and experienced. A document mediates the experience and context of a temporary artwork, mitigating the total disappearance of the artwork through extending a mediated accessibility to the work. This potentially reconfigures the framework of the artwork – its durability, material life, aesthetics and representation, as well as the long-term audience. The long-term audience refers specifically to the widened scope of visitors possible, though only through secondary means. The new generation who come to know the artwork through secondary means experience the work differently. Each successive viewing generation brings their own background and cultural references to a work, so that an audience experiencing a work that no longer exists in fact bring something to it that did not exist at the time that the work was made and originally experienced, even by the artist. The question can be posed whether they are even experiencing the same work through the new conditions imposed on the work.

However, a document can also be framed and used in such a way as to enhance aspects of a temporary artwork, emphasising its inability to last – that the material work is not there while the document is. Recording a temporary artwork thus ceases to be about saving the actual physical object, but instead becomes a means of trying to save the context of the work and the commentary it is part of, in order to present a more complete dialogue of artistic practice.

This is not just an exercise in semantics, but rather a fundamental way of understanding the role of documentation and the purpose of conservation as a whole, focusing particularly on what it means to conserve a temporary artwork, without infringing upon the fundamental characteristics which shape the artwork. Clarifying the indexical relationship between a document and that which it has captured helps to identify both what the document is, as well as capture the outlines of a temporary artwork. This is not just an intellectual position, but also has a clear application, namely that rather than filling in for a temporary artwork with documentation, a document can be used and serve as a means of signalling and contextualizing the absent material object and set out the relationship between document, material object, and temporary artwork as a whole.

Chapter 4

Temporary Art As Experience

4.1 Introduction

In order to imagine a future for temporary artworks, the reality of what these artworks are must first be questioned – in their physical presence, as well as their later inevitable physical absence. This chapter posits that temporary artworks can be understood as experiences, and it explores how these experiences are transmuted between generations of viewers through what artist and theorist Tracy Piper-Wright discusses as different 'modes of encounter.'[1] Piper-Wright refers to the different mediums through which the artwork is accessed and experienced, which include the primary encounter with the original material object as well as subsequent means through which the work has been passed down, such as documentation. The limitations and constraints posed by alternative non-primary modes of encounter are also explored at length, in order to elucidate the ethical and integral consequences of how the work is handed down through experience.

By developing the philosophical underpinning through which temporary artworks can be understood as experiences, specifically applying the theory of 'art as experience' as conceptualised by American philosopher John Dewey in 1932, the framework of

[1] Tracy Piper-Wright, 'Transitions and limens – the fugitive object of temporary outdoor installation art', paper presented at the Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association (MeCCSA) Postgraduate Network Conference, Bangor University 8-9th July 2009 (July 2009), 3, https://www.academia.edu/814809/Transitions_and_Limens_The_Fugitive_Object_of_Temporary_Outdoor_Installation_Art, (accessed February 28, 2015).

temporariness is analysed. This discussion illustrates the constraints around temporary artworks and their relationship with their audience. By clarifying Dewey's original concept, it becomes clear that temporary artworks can be understood as more than the sum of their physical parts and instead can be seen as experiences. As Dewey puts forward, 'art celebrates with peculiar intensity the moments in which the past reinforces the present and in which the future is a quickening of what now is.'[2] Dewey's theory focuses on first-hand encounters that promote experiences. In applying this to temporary artworks, it is proposed that the process of material unmaking is an additional means through which the artist enables a temporary artwork to interact with the viewer and shape their experience. Temporary artworks renegotiate the role of the material and the object – framing the viewer's relation to both, and eliciting temporary artworks as experience.

This chapter will examine the ambiguity of the status of the physical object in relationship to experiencing temporary artworks. It does so through considering the significance of a temporary artwork's physical disappearance and different modes of experience. At the same time a discussion is opened up on how material finitude impacts the audience's experience of the work, as well as the impact of first-hand and second-hand experiences of temporary artworks. The former specifically refers to the dynamic of seeing a temporary artwork in real-time, where the viewer has a primary experience of the physical object *in situ* versus instances where the viewer is unable to experience the material object first-hand and instead relies on documentation or other mediated information, thus having what is here described as a second-hand, or non-primary, experience. Last, this chapter will consider the sphere in which the work is made – whether a temporary artwork was created in a private sphere or imagined for a wider public, and what happens when the private is transmuted for a larger public.

Examples of relevant artworks are drawn upon to illustrate the arguments put forward. Specific attention is paid to those works where the experience is charged by the audience's awareness of imminent physical destruction and disappearance. The first section of the chapter, 'Shaping experience through temporary art', considers German artist Sonja Alhäuser's (b. 1969) edible installation *Exhibition Basics* (2001), which was part of the large *Eat Art!* exhibition at the Busch-Reisinger Museum in Cambridge, MA. It is used to clarify the co-construction of the experience as made possible through the interaction between audience and artwork.

The second part of the chapter, 'First-hand versus second-hand experience' begins by considering the street art series *Home* (2012) by Australian artist Peter Drew (b. 1983)

[2] John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: The Berkeley Publishing Group, [1934] 2005), 17.

in order to clarify the framework of a first-hand experience and that of a second-hand experience. The latter point is further explored by discussing Norwegian artist Rune Guneriussen's (b. 1977) work *A grid of physical entities* (2012) alongside British artist Andy Goldsworthy's (b. 1956) ephemeral outdoor works. Both of which have very little primary relationship with an art audience, as the artist is often the sole witness and thereby has the only first-hand experience of the artwork *in situ*. The implications of this are drawn out further by the third and final section 'The transition from private artwork to public artwork', in which two of Australian artist Hannah Bertram's (b. 1973) works, *The Silence of Becoming and Disappearing* (2010) and *Kutztown Dust Project* (2014) are discussed in order to explore the relationship between private and public works and how the former sometimes becomes the latter, and at what cost.

Through mapping out these relationships, a clearer understanding can be reached as to how to understand temporary artworks, both in real-time as well as after the fact. Through clarifying how temporary artworks can be understood as experiences, and further considering the experience had of an artwork (first-hand versus second-hand), whose experiences they are (the artist versus the audience consuming the work), as well as the circumstances which shape the artwork (primary experiences or otherwise, private versus public), a framework is provided for understanding a temporary artwork in its physical presence, as well as later material absence.

4.2 Shaping experience through temporary art

Temporary artworks raise questions of our expectations of the art object, and, most critically, they heighten the notion of creating an experience through the limited time in which the work is physically available with a focus on the work's inevitable material loss. The issues of duration and objecthood are asserted and made more clear by a temporary artwork's physical unmaking. This thesis asserts, and I will demonstrate, that a temporary artwork can be understood as experience wherein the duration and presentation of the temporary artwork can be seen to critically shape the experience had.

4.2.1 What are the roots of the idea of temporary artwork as experience?

We can situate the concept of 'temporary artwork as experience' as rooted in, and a subset of, 'art as experience'. The concept of 'art as experience' was coined and explored in a series of lectures presented by philosopher John Dewey at Harvard in 1931 and later

developed into the same titled publication 'Art as Experience' in 1934.[3] To clarify how art as experience can be applied to temporary artworks, Dewey's theory will be explained and simultaneously contextualized through acknowledging his relevant predecessors such as Bernard Bosanquet and Ferdinand de Saussure, as well as those who came after and developed similar theoretical constructs, such as Roland Barthes. This will situate Dewey's work while also illuminating connections that prove insightful in our understanding of temporary artworks as experience.

First, it must be stated that Dewey's postulation that an artwork could provide an experience was a development paved by the thoughts of earlier colleagues, including philosopher Bernard Bosanquet, who delivered a series of lectures on aesthetics at University College in London, Autumn 1914, which were later published as 'Three Lectures on Aesthetics'.[4] Significantly, Bosanquet was one of the early scholars to suggest that aesthetics should be understood through the relationship between aesthetic experience and cognition.[5] Specifically, Bonsanquet focused on 'feeling' and the body and mind dynamic. Notably, Dewey did critique Bosanquet, finding his ideas and conception of art too narrow.[6] This was largely the result of Bosanquet's distinction between the experiences provoked by fine art and so-called everyday experiences. Dewey found this problematic, and stated boldly, 'it is safe to say that a philosophy of art is sterilized unless it makes us aware of the function of art in relation to other modes of experience…'[7] Instead Dewey proposed that art and everyday life experiences should not be considered as separate.

'Art as Experience' is significant in that Dewey tried to draw attention away from the mere physical, technical and descriptive (the mimetic) attributes of art e.g. of mainstream aesthetics, which were the primary considerations for artworks at this time. Instead Dewey proposed that audiences consider the entire process enveloping the creative work. Dewey suggested that one could do more than *look* at the physical artwork – one could furthermore *experience* the artwork. The (aesthetic) experience as theorized by Dewey, comprised of 'signs [which] are made into elements of a beautiful object, [which] is the (only) medium which unleashes signs from their meanings without allowing them to

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[3] Dewey, 1.

[4] Bernard Bosanquet, *Three Lectures on Aesthetics* (London: Macmillian Company and Limited, first edition 1915 - reprinted 1923).

[5] Berel Lang, 'Bosanquet's Aesthetic: A History and Philosophy of the Symbol', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Spring, 1968): 377-387.

[6] Thomas M. Alexander, *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience & Nature: The Horizons of Feeling* (New York: University of New York Press, 1987), 42.

[7] Dewey, 10.

regress into their pure thingness.'[8] The basis for this description of art as experience structurally follows the work of linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, who fifteen years earlier was developing the foundation for modern semiotics. However, de Saussure did not apply semiotics to the art world or discuss art as a language in the way that his later followers, such as Roland Barthes did.[9] De Saussure and the climate of academia may have assisted Dewey in formulating his theory, but the forward idea of art as experience is unquestionably Dewey's.

The experience of the artwork, as critically brought forward by Dewey, implied that the artwork can exceed its material and provide the viewer with something transcendental. This experience, as Dewey discussed, 'is the result, the sign, and the reward of that interaction of organism and environment which, when it is carried to the full, is a transformation of interaction into participation and communication.'[10] 'Art denotes a process of doing or making', but this is not enough: 'To be truly artistic, a work must also be aesthetic – that is, framed for enjoyed receptive perception', thus engendering an experience.[11] However, the experience and quality of the experience depend on the perception of the audience.[12] An artwork is understood to be goal-oriented and assuming a particular role with a particular presence. However, this role and presence must be understood and read by the viewer. This implies the significant role of the viewer as reader and interpreter, but also implies that the material is a vehicle for storytelling and ultimately for the art experience.

Although Dewey's philosophical contributions were largely downplayed by his peers, they have since gained increased interest.[13] Dewey is applied here as he laid the groundwork theory that artworks serve more than a visual mimetic purpose; they engender an experience, which is particularly critical for the art movements which have followed in the wake of 'Art as Experience'. Although 'Art as Experience' no longer has shock value, the essence of the idea that artworks are more than the sum of their material parts, but rather experiences, finds its foundation in Dewey's thinking and is still functional and valid

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[8] Christoph Menke, *The Sovereignty of Art: Aesthetic Negativity in Adorno and Derrida*, transl., Neil Salomon (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1998), 157.

[9] This development and application of language in relation to the artwork becomes particularly evident in Roland Barthes development of semiotics which is referenced in a related discussion of art material as sign and signifier in Chapter 3.

[10] Dewey, 22.

[11] Ibid., 48, 49

[12] Michael Mitias, 'Mode of Existence of Aesthetic Qualities,' *Possibility of the Aesthetic Experience,* ed. Michael Mitias (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1986).

[13] Casey Haskins and David I. Seiple, ed., *Dewey Reconfigured: Essays on Deweyan Pragmatism*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999).

today. This has wide-ranging implications for how we understand, present and treat artworks. It also offers insight into how we might negotiate a future for artworks which relinquish their material parts, so to speak, as temporary artworks do.

4.2.2 How is art as experience relevant to temporary artworks specifically?

Dewey's pragmatist approach to art and aesthetic experience incorporates an inclusivity well suited to today's art world, as Dewey does not create strict parameters for what is, and what is not art.[14] Pragmatism here refers to the American philosophical traditional which originated in the late 1800s. The significant contribution of pragmatism was that it encouraged its practitioners to draw out the practical consequences of their hypotheses. Dewey's theoretical inclusivity has laid the foundation of a wide-ranging understanding of what art may be. This understanding not only shifts and opens up what might be considered art, but also implicitly recognizes that there are different types of experiences to be had. When Dewey proposes that the viewer refocus on art experience, rather than focus on art form, he considers qualities such as vividness as well as present experience, triggered by a type of immediate gratification.[15] The connection that is formed between the viewer and the artwork while they share the space focuses firmly on the present moment.

Critically, Dewey posits that one of the primary functions is 'to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience.'[16] The artwork should bridge a relationship between the viewer and the physical work, which he describes as a kind of 'interpenetration' between the self and the world of objects and events.[17] This is an active process; it requires active participation of the viewer who needs to take active register of the work. The significance in this lies in Dewey's proposal that we refocus where to place attention on the artwork, shifting it from the art object to the experience; this could be seen as an early precursor to the conceptual

[14] Dewey was in fact dismissive of art media such as film and photography that today could nonetheless be considered art forms according to Deweyan criteria. Dewey as a man of his time could not have predicted the expansive range of what is considered fine art today. In spite of Dewey's limited application within his own time, his general criteria remain useful. As Dewey categorizes it, what sets the artwork apart from other creations, such as mere entertainment, is its ability to create consummatory and growing experiences. This forges a path into how we might think of extending the artwork and communicating it to the future, namely through finding a means to continue the consummatory and growing experiences.

[15] Dewey, 24.

[16] Dewey, 2.

[17] Dewey, 18.

dematerialization of the artwork.[18] The art object is no longer placed at the forefront, but rather its role as a vehicle of expression and for experience is emphasized.

In the case of temporary artworks, experience becomes one of the important aspects of the artwork, and is heightened by the work's intentional temporariness. Note that it is not argued that experience is the artwork, but rather that it is a significant part of the artwork – the artwork is there to elicit an experience which cannot be repeated and which a temporary artwork's ephemeral nature is complicit in encouraging. The audience who read the work, read the limited timespan as part of the work, triggering awareness of the work's impending obsolescence. The awareness forms a direct connection between work and viewer. The viewer is consciously part of something which cannot last. Whereas the temporary artwork does not permanently alter the existing physical space by leaving a physical mark, its action and presence promote the 'interpenetration' that Dewey advocates.[19]

The fixation on the art object that Dewey opposes is in essence what pragmatist philosopher Richard Shustermann describes as 'the fetishization and commodification of art [through the art object] whose distortions plague and impoverish contemporary experience of art.'[20] Dewey's move away from the art object emphasizes the importance of the relationship between the viewer and the artwork and simultaneously asserts that the work of art is really what the physical object does within experience. Echoing Dewey, it is not the objects which are interesting, but rather what they give us access to: the narratives and rich experiences to which they lend themselves. In regard to temporary artworks whose completion relies on the destruction of the material object, it is this 'liveness' which is first and foremost carried over through the viewer, who is aware of the mutability of the 'original material work' and is thereby prompted to focus on the experience of the work.

As part of the *Eat Art!* exhibition at the Busch-Reisinger Museum in 2002, artist Sonja Alhäuser constructed a work entitled *Exhibition Basics* (2001), consisting of three wholly edible sculptures – chocolate pedestals, dyed pale green with food colouring to match the museum's other nonedible pedestals. On top of the chocolate pedestals stood caramel vitrines, housing marzipan figurines of artists Joseph Beuys and Dieter Roth, an homage to two artists who experimented with foodstuffs as art materials between the Fifties and Eighties, as well as a figurine of the artist herself.

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[18] In the conceptual dematerialization of the artwork, the idea behind the work becomes more important than its physical embodiment. By focusing on experience over object, Dewey advocates a similar priority.

[19] Dewey, 18.

[20] Richard Shusterman, 'Art infraction: Goodman, Rap, Pragmatism', *Art and its Messages: Meaning, Morality, and Society*, ed. Stephen Davies (Pensylvania State University Press, [1995], 1997), 116.

Figure 4-1 Sonja Alhäuser, *Exhibition Basics*, 2001, mixed media, incl. chocolate, installation view, the Busch-Reisinger Museum, Cambridge, MA. Image courtesy of Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum.

The relationship between the art audience and Alhäuser's works is one of literal consumption and taste – whereby the audience literally receives the artwork through consuming it. This makes a combined sensual and cognitive connection between the work and the audience, an experience Dewey would refer to as the afore discussed 'interpenetration'. The experience of the work is illustrated in the most literal fashion through the interaction that Alhäuser encourages with the edible constructions. As clarified by the artist, 'the audience is needed to effectively complete the work, to help it fulfil its destiny of being destroyed to be created.'[21] The sensuality of the work informs the experience, whereby the audience does not simply watch the work unfold, but actively helps to unshape, or unmake it. As Alhäuser explained, 'I use chocolate, popcorn, and caramel to construct these objects because I want to entice visitors to nibble on them, to engage all their senses in an appreciation of the work.'[22] The work references its material impermanence, which impacts the experience – the knowledge that this physical work cannot last. The audience is tempted to participate in the work's completion, and thereby its undoing. The experience is constructed through the audience's interaction and communication with the work. In this sense, the audience and artwork can be seen as co-

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[21]Lena Peacock, 'The Art of Chocolate', *The Business of Art*, (September 6, 2006), http://blogs.usyd.edu.au/bizart/2006/09/the_art_of_chocolate.html, (accessed March 1, 2015).
[22] Ibid.

constructing the experience. This dynamic echoes Dewey's idea that the experience of the artwork is a dual relationship, which is born from the artist's experience, and later manifested through the audience's experience of the work.[23] The attention is focused on the interaction, and also on the temporary physical nature of the art object.

Figure 4-2 Sonja Alhäuser, Exhibition Basics, 2001, mixed media, incl. chocolate, installation detail, the Busch-Reisinger Museum , Cambridge, MA. Image courtesy of the Harvard Gazette.

Little remains after the audience has eaten Alhäuser's work, save for the experience of the work. It exists as a singular installation. The work's finitude is intentional, and the artist plays with the tension that material destruction and finality bring to the work, and how these shape the experience. As Alhäuser elucidates, 'this is because I am always looking for something that is not easy to grasp. Quite early on, my aim was to create moments and to show sensitivities. Taste or an experience is hard to show, but you can create moments.'[24] Temporary artworks capitalise on the moment, as is echoed by the various artists' comments throughout this thesis, including Alhäuser's.

[23] Dewey, 56.

[24] Ludwig Cramer-Klett, 'In the Land of Milk and Honey with Sonja Alhäuser: an interview', *Contemporary Food Lab* (2014), http://contemporaryfoodlab.com/hungry-people/2014/03/in-the-land-of-milk-and-honey-with-sonja-alhauser/, (accessed March 2, 2015).

Figure 4-3 Sonja Alhäuser, *Exhibition Basics*, 2001, mixed media, incl. chocolate, installation detail, the Busch-Reisinger Museum , Cambridge, MA. Image courtesy of the Harvard Gazette.

Dewey usefully uses language as a metaphor for how we interpret artworks. In the case of temporary artworks, it is evident that the work is generally read through its duration, provided the audience is aware of the work's vulnerability and imminent unmaking. When the audience is aware that a work will not last, this encourages a commitment to the work while the material and the viewer are present together. Considering Dewey's idea that the artwork is the experience elicited through the material work, in application to Alhäuser's installation, the artwork and experience can be understood to be activated through the destruction of the edible works and the audience's complicit participation. This experience is transferred through memory, and photographic documentation, and of course some of the contents of the work are carried home in the audience's stomachs. Alhäuser explains,

> I like the thought that art doesn't only live on in the minds of the people but also in the stomach. People internalize the work with one more sense, that of taste. Everybody leaves and takes something home with them.[25]

The work has physically ended, but through these experiences, and their internalization, something is left to hand on through dissemination via discussion or else documentation. In this sense the artwork, or rather the audience's experience of the artwork, lives on. Though

[25] Ibid.

this is arguably also true of non-temporary artworks, the inability to (re)visit temporary artworks long-term, and the reading of their duration, further shape and heighten the experience of a temporary artwork such as Alhäuser's *Exhibition Basics* (2001).

Figure 4-4 Sonja Alhäuser, *Exhibition Basics*, 2001, mixed media, incl. chocolate, installation view, the Busch-Reisinger Museum, Cambridge, MA. Image courtesy of Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum.

The site of installation is an additional factor which doubtlessly configures the audience's experience of the works. *Exhibition Basics* (2001) was situated in a traditional art gallery, where the institutionalized norm is that the audience does not touch the artworks, never mind eat them. By placing unconventional works in a conventional setting, and welcoming the audience's physical interaction with the work, Alhäuser played with the audience's expectation. As emphasised by the artist, 'the norms of museum-going are turned upside down.'[26] By breaking from the museum's conventions, the significance of the moment is highlighted and the audience becomes hyper aware of their present engagement with the environment.

[26] Tanja Maka, 'Interview with Sonja Alhäuser', *Eat Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Art Museums, 2001), 11.

Figure 4-5 Sonja Alhäuser, Exhibition Basics, 2001, mixed media, incl. chocolate, installation view, the Busch-Reisinger Museum, Cambridge, MA. Image courtesy of Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum.

Arts journalist Catherine Dupree described the dynamic of these works after visiting the exhibition as follows, ‘to possess these sculptures, we literally devour them.’[27] These works, which cannot be owned in any traditional sense as they do not consists of a lasting permanent object, capture the senses completely, from their scent which is spread throughout the gallery, to the first touch which leads to taste. As discussed by the show’s curator Tanja Maka, ‘The works draw their power from the heightened awareness of their impermanence. They would soon be only memory. Gone forever.’[28]

Dewey’s theory on how art serves as experience contains signposts for the development of how we can look at and understand temporary artworks. The product of the artwork is not the physical work of art, but rather the experience that is communicated through the work. The work as a whole is a process which extends outside the realms of the physical object and instead focuses on the relationship between the viewer and the work and the development of an experience. Although even non-temporary artworks have a vital non-physical dimension, the significance of a temporary artwork’s immaterial qualities are highlighted and in some cases even heightened by their physical unmaking. These experiences forged between artwork and audience through their engagement with

[27] Catherine Dupree, ‘Sonja Alhäuser's Sweet Installations’, *Gastronomica: The Journal of Critical Food Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Winter 2003): 10-13.
[28] Ibid., 13.

the artwork, become the deposit left by the artwork, the amalgamation of an encounter, later transformed into memory. Primary visitors of the material work are able to revisit the artwork through their initial and internalized experiences of it, but are also able to assist in constructing new experiences for future audiences – helping to shape how they will encounter the work – through verbal and visual narration. And while this can be said to be true for all artworks to an extent, the tension and implications are different. Temporary artworks have no inherent clear future and cannot be (re)visited through traditional means in the long term. If temporary artworks can be understood as experience, continuing the experience becomes a way of carrying these works into the future, accepting the finite lifespan of the material object, but allowing for the narrative and awareness of the work to continue. Locating the artwork after it is physically gone becomes a matter of identifying a space that was inhabited and placing this parallel to the absence of the lost object. What follows is the consideration of the relationship between the experience elicited through direct encounter with the material object and the experience born out of mediated encounters such as through documentation.

4.3 First-hand versus second-hand experience

As the encounter comes to an end, the viewer takes home the experience and can revisit this through memory. Although this is true of any artwork, it is arguably amplified in the radically temporary artworks discussed in this thesis, as these works cannot be revisited in their original material form as this ceases to exist after its intended duration. It is only through recollection in the form of memory and documentation that a temporary work can be (re)visited after its material unmaking. Whereas a temporary artwork physically ends and cannot be repeated, consolidating and presenting the experiences around and of a temporary artwork become interesting ways of circumventing the physical obsolescence and a means to continue to share the work with new audiences.

The experiences of a temporary artwork require a primary (first-hand) encounter with the physical work, after which these experiences can be shared through other modes of none-primary (or second-hand) encounter, such as visual or oral documentation. The experiences had through these mediated secondary forms are what are here described as a second-hand experience or non-primary experience. Before discussing the relationship between the two types of experience, first-hand (primary) and second-hand (non-primary), or indeed, the implications of either, they will first be defined as they are used here.

First-hand experience describes the experience of a visitor who has a primary relationship to an artwork, having visited and seen the original material artwork *in situ.*

First-hand experience denotes a direct experience between the viewer and the original physical artwork that is not mediated through other persons or alternative mediums. It should be noted that although a first-hand or primary experience is direct and ‘in person’, artworks can to a certain extent always be understood as mediated to a viewer in one way or another, as they are always staged and contextualized.

Second-hand experience describes the mediated experience of an artwork had through a source other than the original material artwork, where the experience is not from a primary encounter with the original physical work. The second-hand experience is dependent on a first-hand experience of the work, and with this influenced by the additional framing the first-hand experience provides of the work, via for instance documentation or narration. For instance, if we consider Alhäuser’s *Exhibition Basics* (2001), I could not have known about the installation, which I did not see first-hand, if there had not been first-hand accounts of the work, which acknowledged and documented the exhibition through written and photographic accounts, enabling those who did not witness the work first-hand to still become aware of it.

The primary audience, who witness a temporary artwork first-hand, structure their experience according to their individual relationship with the work and pass this framed experience along. This mediation places additional bias, which further fragments later experiences from the relationship between the viewer and the material artwork. This inevitably distances non-primary audiences from the original material artwork. The mediation is therefore not neutral, but further charged by the intermediary. The term ‘second-hand’ is used consciously to play upon the notions of pre-ownership that surround the experience. A second-hand experience relies on a previous owner (the primary audience) of said experience – someone who has already processed it and shaped it to his or her needs and context before passing it along. The implication of this is that secondary viewers read the work through the framing of the primary viewer. As a result, they are dependent on the framing of the primary viewer not only to experience the work which is no longer physically present, but also read the work through the understanding of the primary viewer. In order to widen their understanding of a temporary artwork, a non-primary audience should try to access a temporary artwork from multiple other sources, in order to address the work from a wider scope of experiences and attempt to escape singular readings of a work.

To clarify and distinguish the significance of how temporary artworks are experienced, examples of works which can be experienced first-hand, such as the street art works by Australian artist Peter Drew (b. 1983), as well as works which are never experienced first-hand by the art audience, such as the installations and subsequent

photographs of Norwegian artist Rune Guneriussen (b. 1977) are discussed, among others. This is done in order to understand the implications of different 'modes of encounter', namely, how the medium in which an artwork is presented shapes how a work is ultimately understood and experienced. The first-hand experience of a temporary artwork incorporates the principle artwork and acknowledges the duration of the work, alongside the work's uniqueness, as it cannot be repeated. The second-hand experience, on the other hand, no longer needs to take duration into consideration, as the secondary source can remain accessible, particularly if there is documentation. In this case, the audience relies on a fragment which correlates to the original work, but also signals the absence of the original work. Secondary sources, such as memories and documents, when contextualized as such, clarify that they are products of a temporary artwork.

What is at stake is the manner in which temporary artworks are registered, which impacts both their care and how they are experienced. The primary audience who experiences the artwork first-hand comes into contact with the physical object while it is still present and knows that this aspect of the work cannot be accessed later. Their experience occurs in a limited and therefore also privileged space of time. Whereas the second-hand experience occurs in a mediated fashion that is not time-dependent, and the urgency of the work is no longer present in the same way. Urgency is used here to indicate the tension formed by the works' limited physical lifespan. Nonetheless, despite the fragmentary relationship between non-primary experiences and an original material object, the former continues to stage a temporary artwork and present a facet of what the work is. In this sense, non-primary experiences present a continuation of temporary artworks. To clarify the different dynamic existing between first-hand and second-hand experiences, artist Peter Drew's work will be brought in as an illustrative example. Drew makes studio-based work for galleries, but has received wide acclaim for his uncommissioned street art for the urban landscape. His street works have been created across cities and countries, including Adelaide, Berlin, Glasgow, London, Melbourne, New York, and Sydney.

I first encountered Drew's work on the street while on my way to work in 2012. While getting out of the subway station and moving between a crowd of commuters I took a shortcut down a small side-street off Byres Road in Glasgow, and stopped as I came face to face with two wheat-pasted paper portraits of the same short-haired woman – one staring straight ahead, the other in profile – roughly two meters of striking details on the wall in front of me. The images stuck with me, both in their execution, but also the material and placement that made clear that these were encounters that could not last or be revisited for long. Glasgow weather is not kind to street art, especially made of such ephemeral material, as the damp stimulates environmental weathering, and I could already see the

paper wearing. While I acknowledged the inevitable time limit on the images' duration – a clear first-hand experience that stuck with me, constructed between the images on the wall and my awareness and acknowledgement of them. I would continue to see the two depictions of the woman's face, alongside other of Drew's works posted throughout the city for the next weeks until they were gone, always encountered while *en route*.

Drew's project, titled *Home*, took place in 2012 in Glasgow, while the artist was completing a Master of Research in Creative Practices at the Glasgow School of Art. The wheat-pasted images, a combination of photographs and drawings of these photographs, that formed *Home* (2012), were based on a collection of portrait photographs of the artist's friends and family. *Home* (2012) was an investigation around the shaping of community and encounter. Drew discussed this work as exploring the beauty in reaction, in reference to the public's encounters with the works, and where the target audience is first and foremost the local population.[29] The artist often waited around the works and photographed the people passing by, taking note of their awareness of the work, the interactions and experiences. Producing art is a means for Drew to explore human emotion and experience. The placement of the works, namely public spaces, helps audiences get around the defences of exclusive art spaces by democratizing the work through making it readily accessible. Anyone might come across these works, and anyone might be able to read something into the portraits, or at the very least recognize what they are, either way forging a connection and establishing an experience.

Experiencing the physical work draws on the themes and ideas that Drew was exploring. Seeing the physical works *in situ*, they are hard to ignore – particularly given their placement and sheer size. The primary experience is further shaped by the manner in which the works are encountered, with the viewer invariably on his or her way to a destination. Seeing the works recorded would not be the same, as it would shrink them and alter the immediacy that they pose while they catch the audience off guard, stopping them in their tracks while they are going about their daily business. In this sense, the purpose of documentation, to record, is different from that of the artwork itself.

[29] Peter Drew, *Personal Interview*, (March 22, 2013).

Figure 4-6 Peter Drew, Home, 2012, paper, wheat paste, Ashton Lane, Glasgow. Image courtesy of the artist.

Documents present a means of continuing a temporary artwork, such as Drew's *Home* (2012) series, in that they enable a non-primary audience to acknowledge the work that used to exist, whereas the material temporary artwork enables the primary audience to acknowledge its existence, in the present, alongside them. Seeing the work outside real-time removes the intimacy from the connection between the work and the audience as they co-construct and experience in the present. The artwork as experienced through an alternative medium, out of real-time, situates the artwork somewhere elsewhere, and blurs what the artwork was by providing a limited scope and a view that removes the sense of urgency formed by the limited duration of the work and viewing it *in situ*.

Drew's Glasgow project can still be visited online through the artist's own documentation, as well as that of other primary visitors. Works which no longer exist can still be accessed in some form and experienced years later, reaching far larger audiences than the limited first-hand experience of the work *in situ*. To a certain extent this means that the work is able to live on, carried forward through the images and experiences which reference something that no longer exists. *Home* (2012) remains accessible through what is passed on to non-primary audiences.

Figure 4-7 Peter Drew, *Home*, 2012, paper, wheat paste, Ashton Lane, Glasgow. Image courtesy of the artist.

For Drew, it is important that everyone can access the work, on the street or online, though he acknowledges that secondary access is different. The work is really about people – this is what makes it interesting for the artist. However, the experience of the work is not the same for various members of the primary audience to begin with. The experience of the artwork, Drew explains, (in line with Dewey) is not a singular act.[30] There is no universality regarding how a temporary artwork is experienced. The work will be experienced differently even amongst primary audiences, so the different register the work has for secondary audiences does not bother the artist or seem particularly problematic. Second-hand experiences, despite their sensorial loss – they cannot be touched or smelled and are seen outside their original context and scale – are experiences nonetheless. Documentation serves as a practical way of reaching a wider audience and thus serves a clear purpose. This opens the following consideration: 'How does the mode of encounter – first-hand primary experience of the work *in situ* versus second-hand experience mediated through documentation or even narration, impact the experience of the artwork?'

[30] 'In a work of art, different acts, episodes, occurrences melt and fuse into unity, and yet do not disappear and lose their own character as they do so – just as in a genial conversation there is a continuous interchange and blending, and yet each speaker not only retains his own character but manifests it more clearly than is his wont.' Dewey, 38.

Figure 4-8 Peter Drew, *Home*, 2012, paper, wheat paste, Renfrew Street, Glasgow. Image courtesy of the artist.

There is a much larger number able to experience the work second-hand, as Drew advocates and makes use of in his practice. However, second-hand experience relies by necessity on primary visitors who have experienced the artwork first-hand. Note that in some cases, it is the artist who is the primary visitor, or at the least is part of the group of primary visitors. Sharing a first-hand experience with non-primary audience members involves a degree of interpretation which removes the second-hand audience further from the original artwork. What the secondary viewer sees is not just the work, but rather the relationship as defined by the primary viewer. Instead the secondary audience's experience depends on how close the primary audience got to the work, and is informed by their dynamic. Both my experience of Drew's work, together with my skill at communicating the work, inform how it is framed and presented in this thesis.

To further develop the implications of different modes of experience, a different work by another artist will be considered, which further plays upon the tension of transition and subsequent questions that arise from how the temporary is experienced. Consider the following: a green woodland scene, dusky and dark, with a bright string of lights across it. The string of lights is fashioned from old table lamps strung together to form a kind of fantastical deranged bunting in an otherwise calm green landscape. Something man-made is depicted, interrupting, or at the very least, in conversation with nature. The work is entitled *A grid of physical entities* (2012) and was created by artist Rune Guneriussen.

Figure 4-9 Rune Guneriussen, *A grid of physical entities*, 2012, c-print on aluminium, 150 x 208 cm. Image courtesy of the artist and Rutger Brandt Gallery, Amsterdam.

I have never actually witnessed the original scene, nor could I have. Guneriussen's oeuvre is comparable in brevity to many temporary artworks in their limited time frame. However, Guneriussen's works are arguably even more intimate as the artist is their sole primary witness. The artist uses everyday man-made objects such as lamps, books, and telephones to create elaborate and whimsical outdoor installations, which he then photographs, after which the installations are dismantled. The artist's photographs are the only means through which the work is presented to the audience who, should they try to find the work depicted in the images, can look only for the site that once housed it. After the artist makes, experiences, photographs, and disposes of the physical work, it continues to exist only in photographic documentation and possible narration. Thus the audience can have only a second-hand experience of *A grid of physical entities* (2012), as mediated by Guneriussen's first-hand documentation, which acknowledges and accounts for the artwork in question.

As the art audience cannot develop a primary relationship to the physical construction, this complicates what we might understand the artwork to be – whether it is the initial physical installation witnessed only by the artist, or the later photograph that documents the work. If it is the first, Guneriussen's works can be considered temporary artworks, within the parameters set by this thesis. They are unrepeatable physical artworks

that are produced with an intentionally limited lifespan. The photograph can in this instance be understood to be a type of memento of the work which has ended. However, if the photograph is indeed the artwork, these works would not in fact seem to be temporary works, as the photograph, which is also the artwork, continues to exist, and can potentially be multiplied. The artist has clarified the relationship between the photograph and installation, stating the following, 'the work is made solely on site, and the photographs represent the reality of the installation itself.' [31] This means that the artwork is the installation and the photograph serves as a type of curated view of the work. *A grid of physical entities* (2012) could therefore be considered a temporary artwork, but the conscious use of photography to frame 'the reality' of the work is problematic. The audience is not only unable to experience the site-specific sculptural installation first-hand, but is furthermore presented with a particular understanding of the artwork, namely the artist's, through the framing of the photograph, as with any second-hand experience.

While Guneriussen's work is by necessity experienced second-hand, the artist deems the documentation to be representative of the work. Despite having clarified that the photograph is not the artwork, Guneriussen's statement posits that what could be considered the 'aura' of the artwork is faithfully captured in the photograph. The concept of the 'aura' references theorist Walter Benjamin's 1936 conceptualisation that the aesthetic presence of art is grounded in the experience that it elicits. Benjamin vehemently argued that the artwork's aura – its essence – cannot be found in replication.[32] Although an artwork is in principle always reproducible in some form, what is at stake, and what Benjamin proposed a reproduction lacks, is its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.[33] Although not capturing the full history of an artwork, a document such as Gunerissen's photograph does capture a moment, a fragment of this history, and, if presented as such, is able to depict what the artist deems to be 'the reality' of the artwork.

I would like to propose that the absence of the physical artwork, which is highlighted by the document, can indeed still be faithful to the 'aura' of the artwork, while not possessing the actual 'aura'. The constraint lies in the contextualisation of the artwork for secondary audiences. If the document is used to clarify the absence of the artwork, i.e. it serves as proof of something which was there, but no longer is, and makes public a work

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[31] This highlights the significance of Guneriussen's work as existing *in situ* and suggests that the photograph is not the actual artwork, but rather a framing of the work and a means of presenting it. Rune Guneriussen, 'artist biography,' http://www.runeguneriussen.no/biography, (accessed March 4, 2015).

[32] Walter Benjamin, 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction', [1936], transl., Harry Zohn, *Illuminations*, ed., Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, [1968], 2007): 217 – 51.

[33] Ibid.

that is gone, it can still elicit the experience that Benjamin discusses. However, rather than elicit the experience through the presence of the artwork, it does so through its absence. A non-primary experience of a temporary artwork is an experience of the absence of the material artwork. The photograph of *A grid of physical entities* (2012) becomes a means of eliciting experience through exploring the 'aura' of the artwork without the physical artwork. It references the 'aura' and the absence of the 'real thing'. The second-hand experiences of non-primary audiences automatically refer to the irretrievable: a work which once was, but will never be again. The reality and also experience of a temporary artwork is vested in this.

Guneriussen is not alone in producing artworks with which only the artist has a primary relationship. British Artist Andy Goldsworthy's (b. 1956) body of ephemeral work largely depends on an inbuilt obsolescence which is as integral to the work as its creation, and which enables the artist to explore notions of entropy and mortality.[34] The artist creates site-specific land art that weathers on location, generally alone. In some cases, the artist documents these temporary works through photography, after which the artist sometimes displays and sells the photographs. In these instances, the physical works are made without an immediate primary audience, save for the artist, and anyone who might stumble across the work while it lasts. However, the work is later made public as a photowork, much as in Guneriussen's practice. Again, as with Guneriussen, the relationship between the photograph and the installation needs to be clarified in order to understand what the artwork is. Curator Ben Tufnell argues that Goldsworthy's process of exhibiting the photographs emphasizes the temporal aspect and that the captured images are a kind of 'residue' after the fact.[35] Goldsworthy in turn describes the photographs he takes as an outcome of the work, clarifying that 'they are not the purpose but the result of my art'.[36] This situates the photographs and their connection to the installation in a comparable light to Guneriussen's work. The photographs, as the artist has clarified, are not the artwork, but do become a means of representing the work and making it public.

Artists working in the temporary genre often make use of creating additional more enduring objects which reference the ephemeral event as well as historical documentation. In this manner, the artist is paradoxically, as described by artist and art historian Holly Crawford, allowed 'to have their traditional art objects to sell and exhibit, while at the same time have their ephemeral aesthetic cake by very publicly positioning their art as

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[34] Ben Tufnell, *Land Art* (New York, N.Y.: Distributed in the U.S. by Harry N. Abrams, 2006), 81.

[35] Ibid.,82.

[36] Andy Goldsworthy and Terry Freidman, *Hand to Earth: Andy Goldsworthy Sculpture 1976-1990* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2006), 9.

temporary.'[37] In these instances the artist is involved in making the ephemeral enduring. What this does in terms of experience, is to allow the work which no longer exists to continue to engage with future audiences. Furthermore, by heightening and clarifying the relationship between the document as it is presented to the viewer, and the physical artwork created *in situ*, the experience clarifies that the viewer is witnessing something which is otherwise no longer present. In Goldsworthy's words,

> If the photograph represents the work alive, then work brought indoors becomes its husk. Much of the energy is lost: stones become isolated and leaves dry out ...yet there is still enough meaning left. Not only does such work explore the relationship between indoor and outdoor alongside the image, it emphasises the physicalness of what I do.[38]

In this sense, the document becomes effective by demonstrating what it is not, namely the artwork.

Due to the nature of Goldsworthy's ephemeral works – their material, duration and location – the intensity of the artist's gestural act of creating is apparent only momentarily. These acts, which are largely created privately, can be shared only through documenting the work, even if this comes at the price of displaying what is only a limited view of the work. The photographs often document the moment of the work's highest tension, when it is most strongly reacting, or about to change. These fleeting moments, when the work is changing, are captured and stabilized through the frame of the photograph. As the artist explains,

> Each work grows, stays, decays – integral parts of a cycle which the photograph shows at its height, marking the moment when the work is most alive. There is an intensity about a work at its peak that I hope is expressed in the image. Process and decay are implicit.[39]

Capturing the work at its most activated point becomes a means to reflect on the work, to reassess it. The viewer, witnessing only the still image, is given space to think about what lies outside the frame and is implied, namely what came before and what happened after, and to remember that what they are seeing is part of a process which has ceased to be. The documents mediate accessibility for secondary audiences and to a certain extent represent the underlying theme of Goldsworthy's practice itself, namely to explore and look through the surface of things. This illuminates Dewey's idea once again, that the artwork is what

[37] Holly Crawford, 'Having Their Cake and Eating It Too: The Case of Christo's (and Jeanne-Claude's) Im(permanence) and Exclusivity', *Artistic Bedfellows: Histories, Theories and Conversations in Collaborative Art Practices*, ed. Holly Crawford (University Press of America, 2008), 257.

[38] Goldsworthy and Freidman.

[39] Ibid.

the physical object does within experience.[40] The vulnerable nature of the work and its fragility are implied by the image captured. However, the image does not fully capture the palpability of the tension between the material work's materials and interaction with its environment. In bearing an 'indexical relationship' to the artwork, the photographs do not transmit the full weight of the work to the secondary audience, but instead imply what it might be.[41] In the case of Goldsworthy, much like Guneriussen, one can almost not speak of primary first-hand experience, as it is only the artist who is privileged with this. This poses the question whether the audience always needs the first-hand experience.

4.3.1 Do we always need the first-hand experience?

The experience of a temporary artwork cannot be passed on without a first-hand experience, as the work cannot be transmuted without a primary reference. However, it is difficult to imagine an artwork which is never experienced or passed down. At the work's point of inception, one would still consider the artist who constructs the work as experiencing it. Accordingly, the artist serves as the primary audience. One could conclude that a work of art cannot exist without a first-hand experience. As Suzete Venturelli and Antenor Ferreira Côrrea remark, 'The presence of the viewer in the act of performance [of ephemeral and interactive art] is a *sine qua non* condition for its existence.'[42] Though arguable the artist can simultaneously also be the work's viewer. Indeed, there will always be a first-hand experience of an artwork, namely the artist's. He or she may choose to share their work further with other primary visitors, and perhaps with an even wider non-primary audience. However, this is not always the case. Goldsworthy makes a great deal of work which is not recorded or shared with an audience. These unrecorded and unshared works are therefore only known by the artist. As Paul Stapleton notes, 'without a stable form of dissemination, it remains difficult for performance to integrate effectively within the academy's knowledge economy.'[43] This is to say that what is not shared and passed down is lost. Though Stapleton focuses his discussion on live art, as discussed before,

[40] 'Since the actual work of art is what the product does with and in experience…' Dewey, 1.

[41] Goldsworthy and Freidman.

[42] Suzete Venturelli and Antenor Ferreira Côrrea, 'Ephemeral Art and Interactive Art: the quest for preservation and dissemination', Isea 2016 Hong Kong 香港 Cultural R>evolution May 16-22, 2016, 22nd International Symposium on Electronic Art , https://isea2016.scm.cityu.edu.hk/openconf/modules/request.php?module=oc_program&action=view.php&id=264&type=6&a= , (accessed May 30, 2016).

[43] Paul Stapleton, 'Dialogic Evidence: Documentation of Ephemeral Events', http://www.ahds.ac.uk/performingarts/news/reports/stapleton-Dialogic%20Evidence.pdf, 5, (accessed June 12, 2015).

performance theory is relevant to temporary artworks as live art and temporary art bear similar vulnerabilities and constraints. If the first-hand experience is experienced by only one person, the artist, and not transmitted in any form and therefore never experienced again, there is no secondary audience or second-hand experience.

Goldworthy and Guneriussen's practices are comparable and find compatriots in the practices of other artists whose work is also known only through its documentation, such as the marks made during long walks by English artist Richard Long (b. 1945), which the artist photographs, or those by Long's fellow English walking artist Hamish Fulton (b. 1946), who journals his nature walks in diverse media.[44] Long's works made while walking began with *A Line Made While Walking* (1967), made during his time at the Saint Martin's School of Art in London, where the artist had walked back and forth, forming a straight line through the grass in the countryside. The repeated act left a mark which the artist captured in a black and white photograph. The walking as artworks provide the artist a means of exploring the relationships between time, distance, geography and measurement – in essence the framework which defines experience. The photograph helps to blur the artwork's boundary between action and object, but it is not the work itself. Like Goldsworthy, Long uses photographs, or sometimes draws a map or creates a text work, to capture the gesture of what he is doing on his walks and make this aspect of the work public. Fulton, on the other hand, creates works that do not visibly alter the space in which they take place. His works are solely about the experience of walking, again captured through text and image. Whereas a case could be made that Long produces temporary artworks, Fulton's walks in which he does not actively create physical works, but rather produces encounters that exist outside of a material artwork, cannot be considered temporary artworks.

All four of the afore-discussed artists do, however, create private artistic interventions which build on the idea of creating site-specific experiences through interacting with their environment. All four also create works of which they have the sole first-hand experience, and which are made public only through some form of documentation. The outside world thus comes to terms with the work only through a second-hand experience. First-hand experience is critical in making second-hand experience possible, and shaping it.

[44] Walking artists employ walking as a mode of art practice.

4.3.2 Taking note of issues of secondary register

The limitations of secondary register (non-primary experience) are that the audience receives an incomplete sense of the work in its entirety. As discussed, the experience is shaped through the artwork and how it is presented; therefore, changing the mode of encounter, for instance through documentation, necessarily also changes the way the artwork is understood and experienced. As we have seen with Alhäuser's work, the first-hand experience can include eating the artwork in the gallery. The secondary audience does not experience that level of engagement and interaction with the work. Their experience is simply shaped by the knowledge that the primary audience ate the work. However, this experience is removed from understanding what it felt like to break apart the edible pieces and literally consume the works. The framework surrounding Alhäuser's edible sculptures, namely their durability, and the site and sphere in which the works were situated, are known, but understood differently in the context of the second-hand experience – they are more conceptual and always an arm's length removed.

Work experienced off-site and outside its physical shape changes its character. Having experienced Drew's work first-hand, and later coming across it through secondary mediated means, it became evident how the full scope of the work was lost and instead only aspects of the artwork were transmitted. Whereas the primary audience experiences *presence* – the physical object before it is gone, the secondary audience experiences *absence* – the physical object after it no longer exists. This is potentially problematic in that the two experiences are not equal, even though they reference the same work. The primary audience transmits a different kind of experience to the secondary audience. The first-hand experience of temporary artworks lies in consciously witnessing a work that cannot last, and the awareness of this. The second-hand experience lies in knowing something was there. The mediated mode of encounter in which the artwork is already framed posits proof and awareness. As put forward by essayist Susan Sontag, 'a photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened. The picture may distort, but there is always the presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what's in the picture.'[45] The document is able to carry an autobiographical narrative.[46] This is to say that the document, as a fragment of the artwork, echoes the work as a whole, framing and contextualising it. Through the document secondary audiences become aware that something was there which no longer exists; yet something of it remains at their fingertips. Non-primary audiences can access the work only through mediated modes of

[45] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 1979), 5.

[46] Claudia Mitchell, *Doing Visual Research* (London: Sage Publications, 2011), 50.

encounter which distance them from the work and result in different experiences. This is a compromise. It allows for the artwork to continue to exist in the sense that the work remains known and still elicits experiences, but the access to the work is restricted and incomplete. It is, however, one of the only means through which we can continue to make an unmade temporary artwork available.

If we think of Guneriussen's temporary installations which exist once and are not recreated, the only way that future audiences can come to know the works is through their documentation and any other narration the artist might provide. Future experiences of these works depend on this. None of the temporary artworks called upon in this thesis still physically exist in their original material form. In some cases, as already noted, I have never witnessed the original work. However, the visual traces and oral accounts left of these works enable me to engage with the work nonetheless. Using the traces and oral accounts as modes of inquiry to question what these works mean after the fact and how the works might be experienced and understood. They also assist in exploring whether the existing documents left behind are enough, or alternative strategies and understandings of what it means to conserve might be relevant in promoting a durational engagement with temporary artworks.

Goldsworthy's photograph stills exemplify what Mitchell discusses as 'the presence of absence'.[47] They capture the artwork when it is most activated and enable a secondary audience reading the photograph to infer process, that there was a work which existed in a motion that is not captured by the image. In essence it is a further development of what Mitchell proposes, namely considering how the visual image or object one looks at relates to the whole that it speaks of – as applied to the temporary artwork this means considering what the photograph of the work is in relation to the temporary artwork itself. And ultimately, in relation to this research, this means exploring what looking at the photograph of a work that no longer exists elicits. The photographs referred to in this research help to visualize what is at stake – the inevitably absent artworks – material things which no longer exist. The image stirs up the experience where the absent artwork no longer can.

[47] Ibid., 97.

4.4 The transition from private artwork to public artwork

The focus on the viewer's first-hand experience of the artwork arises around the 1960s with the conceptual dematerialization of the art object.[48] As discussed in Chapter 2, attention moves from the aesthetic art object to the viewer's consciousness of the work, decentralising the object.[49] Instead, concept-driven art brings the encounter with, and experience of, the artwork to the fore. All those who come into contact with the work become interpreters of the work. This interactivity is continued in contemporary art, and most notably in temporary art, where, as developed in the previous section, and concisely phrased by art historian Susan Pearce, the audience become 'actors in the story', charged with the contextualisation and future experiences of the work.[50] One might say that the viewer becomes a collaborator in the work, participatory in recognizing the tension that the artist promotes with the work's limited timespan, which shapes the experience. In this sense the viewer is complicit in constructing the experience through their awareness and commitment to the work. Artist Anya Gallaccio, whose work has been discussed previously, specifically lists the viewer as crucial witness and collaborator of her temporary works, stating 'the viewer brings his or her own subjective histories to the work, thereby completing it. In this sense my work is theatrical; the audience is part of the equation.'[51] The work not only performs, but the audience becomes spectator to the work, implicitly acknowledging the work and feeding into its narrative. As a result of the experience elicited through the work, ideas and memories are formed, through which traces of the work are retained. This in turn posits that the visitor who has had a primary first-hand experience of the work becomes an unintentional archivist of sorts, carrying the work forth and controlling future second-hand experiences of the work.

4.4.1 Whose experience?

The question that follows from this is who is the primary audience? This is dependent on the sphere in which the work is made, whether it is public or private, which in turn impacts how it can be experienced, and also who frames and thus controls any future experiences of the work. Furthermore, the sphere in which the work is made also controls the number

[48] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: a critical history* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 130; Lippard and Chandler.

[49] Dan Graham, *Two-Way Mirror Power: selected writings by Dan Graham*, ed., Alexander Alberro, (Cambridge, Mass, 1999), 157.

[50] Susan M. Pearce, 'Objects as meaning; or narrating the past', *Interpreting Objects and Collection*, ed. Susan M. Pearce (London: Routledge, 1994), 28.

[51] Anya Gallaccio, 'Response to a Space', *a-n (For Artists)* (November 2000), 3.

of primary audience members, and thus how many unintentional archivists there will be who can pass the experience of the work on. The scope of first-hand experiences is interesting because it affects how many first-hand experiences of the work there are; this is significant because, as already discussed, experiences are variable. If we think back to the examples of artists such as Guneriussen or Goldsworthy, where there is often a singular first-hand experience, namely the artist's, captured through a photograph, this single experience lacks the variability that multiple experiences could offer. The artwork is shared and passed on from a single perspective. The secondary audience thus becomes dependent on one single experience from which to construct their own. Their second-hand experience is therefore even narrower than the experience that could be formed from multiple first-hand experience sources, as they would allow for a more varied understanding of the work.

On the other hand, Drew creates works that have a much bigger primary audience by placing his works in the city streets. As a consequence, there is a far bigger pool of experiences to be passed down. The artist documents his work, but so do audience members, and both share them across different platforms. The secondary audience still does not have access to the whole artwork, but they can approach it from different views – their experience is constructed from a wider variety of first-hand experiences. Alhäuser's sphere lies between Guneriussen, Goldsworthy and Drew. Her works are public, but also situated in the gallery. The scope of the primary audience that witnesses her work is more than one, but less than it would be on a busy urban city street.

The types of audiences are also different depending on the sphere in which the work is made. In cases where the artist is the sole primary audience, they are simultaneously creating and experiencing the work, and as the work is made public only through a mediated means, the primary relationship with the work is deeply intimate. Drew's work is arguably much less personal for the primary audience as a whole. The wheat-pasted images provide a break or intervention within the urban landscape and do not require any specialist reading and do not have to be sought out. Instead the artworks readily present themselves to the primary audience in their urban environment, waiting for the viewer to take notice. The way a work relates to its environment shifts according to the sphere in which it is placed. This is because the sphere determines who can participate and experience the work first-hand. Alhäuser again sits between Guneriussen and Goldsworthy's highly private works, for which the artist is the only primary audience, and Drew's very public work. Although Alhäuser's artworks are installed in what is a public sphere, the art gallery, it is also limited by this location. The gallery charges an admission fee. Furthermore, it can be argued that those who visit art galleries represent a limited and

specialist segment of individuals. Alhäuser's work, though public, is not completely accessible to all due to the circumstances in which the work is situated.

4.4.2 What are the circumstances?

The question of public versus private audience is in part a question about seeing – and who gets to see. It therefore also becomes a matter of who gets to have the experience and what kind of experience they are able to have, as we have seen that experiences vary greatly according to different modes of encounter. The private initial sphere further limits those able to have a primary experience of the work, which bears all the consequences discussed. The private work inevitably makes the artwork more exclusive through limiting the scope of first-hand experiences and in doing so makes the work more vulnerable to a certain extent, as it comes to rely on the aforementioned framing of a smaller audience to carry the work forward. The context almost encourages a more limited understanding of the work and a greater loss of variability. The temporary nature of the work, in tandem with the viewer's framing and the fallibility of their memory, tests both the strength of memory through the passing of time as well as the reliability of the narrator. What gets passed on depends on what the viewer, as unintentional archivist, stores away, and how well they do so.

The framework of private and public work and the tensions that come with it can be illustrated through examples taken from Australian artist Hannah Bertram's work (b. 1973). It is worth noting that this discussion of possible audience scope is an extension of first-hand versus second-hand experiences, as it considers the same tensions of register and transition between multiple generations of audiences. Bertram creates forms that not only acknowledge, but are also defined by, their loss under the ethos of 'evolving from, and devolving towards nothing'.[52] Bertram creates highly detailed and ornamental 'drawings' which she stencils out of ash and dust, on various interior surfaces which echo the decorative elements of their surrounding and evoke themes of the daily ritual, housework, and mortality. The significance of the work lies in the artist's selection of material – ash and dust – and in how the construction of the artwork also implicitly contains the work's destruction. The work consists of the products of everyday life and movement, and is invariably also disrupted and swept up by these movements – a living, moving *memento mori* forming a literal variant of the notion 'dust to dust' or Horace's *Pulvis et Umbra*

[52] Hannah Bertram, 'Home', http://www.hannahbertram.com, (accessed August 12, 2015).

Sumus (We are but dust and shadows).[53] Bertram describes the significance of this performative process as follows, 'it's the longing and loss experienced through its temporality, and the simple separate contemplation of what dust is that contribute to something poetic emerging.'[54] What is made evident is the work's reliance on its material unmaking and the tension produced by the experience of inevitable loss.

Bertram's work is not extraordinary, but rather typical of temporary artworks, and therefore of interest, in its illustration of the issues at the crux of this research. The dust series make evident the framework within which temporary artworks function, their performative nature hinged on time.[55] The series exposes the problems and questions these works address, which confound traditional art collecting and conservation practices. Bertram does not make fixed objects, but rather creates temporary artworks that come into being through material that is then disrupted and swept away, thereby completing the work through its physical unmaking.

The use of dust is interesting, as it is a way for the artist to subtly explore the private and the public sphere and how we move between these different areas of our lives – in essence an investigation of how we move in space. Bertram does this by using the materials left by human movement to create works seen by large groups of people, which are in turn also disrupted by small intimate movements. It is an exercise of thinking between different scales – the dust produced from human movement and interaction which is somehow private, and then used to make public works for larger groups of people, after which the dust is disrupted and unsettled by the few. The material moves between different realms and switches from serving as private waste to a work that is public and prized, only to revert. The movement of the dust is thus a constant flow of becoming and unbecoming. Regarding the use of dust, and specifically the way that the artist uses it, Bertram comments, 'it's a way of looking at the absence of ourselves in the future.'[56] The work which cannot last, created out of materials from actions which did not last, echoes our own inability to last.

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[53] Part of the funereal phrase: 'Ashes to ashes, dust to dust' originating in the Book of Common Prayer. Horace's quote comes from 'The Odes' Book IV, ode vii, line 16.

[54] Betram quote taken from Paul Andrews, 'Hannah Bertram - Artecycle 2013 - Upcycling Series', *Interviews*, (October 4, 2013), http://paulandrew-interviews.blogspot.co.uk/2013/10/hannah-bertram-artecycle-2013-upcycling.html, (accessed February 20, 2014).

[55] The performative is applied differently in different disciplines including anthropology, performance studies and cultural studies. Here it is used applying Dorothea Von Hantelmann's notion of how the artwork 'acts' within its ritualistic space of display, investigating the framework of behaviour established by the artist. Dorothea von Hantelmann, *How to Do Things With Art* (Zürich: Diaphanes 2007). A discussion on the relevance of 'performance' and the 'performative' within temporary artworks is brought forward in Chapter 5.

[56] Ibid.

Artists creating temporary artworks consciously employ material unmaking, as a vehicle for loss – both of the physical work, and in order to engage with broader themes that deal with loss as a concept. Note that these are not always mournful; the temporary can also be celebrated. Loss as it is used within this thesis is not always about sorrow, but rather indicates change and the inability to keep. It ties into instability and impending absence. In the case of Bertram, the artist employs material loss, alongside material selection, to explore notions of becoming and disappearing, and the cyclical tendencies of life and work. Whether this is experienced as joyful or sad depends on the viewer's reading of the work.

The primary first-hand experience of Bertram's work makes clear and palpable how fragile the material work is, that breathing too closely might disturb the material, but also that the material will inevitably be disturbed. Bertram's works are experienced as encounters, very much because of their temporariness and the inevitability that they shift and change. In second-hand experiences of Bertram's works, the viewer has a more distanced, and therefore also less sensual and more sanitised experience of the material work. He or she no longer needs to worry about getting too close, breathing too heavily, or resisting the possible urge to touch or even smear the work. In creating works that come undone, Bertram discusses this as a matter of 'disrupting the expectation.'[57] The second-hand viewer's relationship to one of Bertram's works is much more passive. Part of the work's fragility as well as the viewer's responsiveness is lost when the private work becomes public and the work is passed down and experienced second-hand.

In terms of audiences, Bertram's work is created in two spheres, the private and the public. Private works are limited to an intimate set-up, such as for the series *The Silence of Becoming and Disappearing* (2010), in which ten ephemeral site-sensitive dust and ash works were created and installed in private Australian homes. The works lived and interacted with the inhabitants, and the inhabitants were responsible for choosing the audience and the duration of the installation in their home. As a result, the gatherings were relatively small, limited in some cases to a handful of people, which severely downsized the scope of primary first-hand experiences. The duration of the works ranged from a few hours, to a few months. One of the works allegedly made it past a year, as it was tucked away and left undisturbed in a drawer. The imagery created for each work was influenced by decorative elements in the home in which the work was installed, such as wallpaper, carpets and family heirlooms, as well as through stories shared by the residents. This meant that the works were not just site-specific, but also audience-specific. The exclusivity of the

[57] Andrews, 2013.

works capitalised on the intimacy of responding to both surrounding and inhabitant. This complete consideration turned each work into a type of *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

Figure 4-10 Hannah Bertram, The Silence of Becoming and Disappearing, 2010, dust, installation detail, private home, Australia. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 4-11 Hannah Bertram, The Silence of Becoming and Disappearing, 2010, dust, installation detail, private home, Australia. Image courtesy of the artist.

In contrast, while serving as artist-in-residence at Kutztown University, Bertram created the public one-off site-responsive installation, the *Kutztown Dust Project* (2014),

which consisted of everyday dust and ash in the Marlin and Regina Miller Gallery at Kutztown University, Pennsylvania, during the spring of 2014. The work, as typical for Bertram, explored entropy and direct physical engagement, which, given the nature of these works, equals disruption and destruction. It existed for three weeks in the public gallery and was ultimately dismantled by the students in a final public sweeping. The *Kutztown Dust Project* (2014) encouraged a far larger primary audience in comparison with *The Silence of Becoming and Disappearing* (2010), and as a result there were far more first-hand experiences of the former. The work was also less personal. It did not touch upon the same degree of personal elements the artist was able to tap into when making the private works for *The Silence of Becoming and Disappearing* (2010).

In both cases there is documentation which has made aspects of the work public to an even wider audience, 'democratizing the work', as Drew would describe it, or perhaps 'capturing the true essence of the work', as Guneriussen would propose. But an additional question to address is the ethical consideration whether the private should be made public, and what this does to the experience of the work.

Figure 4-12 Hannah Bertram, *Kutztown Dust Project*, 2014, dust and ash, Installation detail, Marlin and Regina Miller Gallery, Kutztown University, Pennsylvania. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 4-13 Hannah Bertram, Kutztown Dust Project, 2014, dust and ash, Installation detail, Marlin and Regina Miller Gallery, Kutztown University, Pennsylvania. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 4-14 Hannah Bertram, *Kutztown Dust Project*, 2014, dust and ash, Installation detail, Marlin and Regina Miller Gallery, Kutztown University, Pennsylvania. Image courtesy of the artist.

For the Kutztown University installation as much as for *The Silence of Becoming and Disappearing* (2010), and any other dust and ash work by Bertram, the final sweeping and removal of the work is intrinsically part of the completion of the work.[58] None of these works can be stabilized and kept long-term, but the scope of their audiences is different. Where the Kutztown University installation welcomed a large primary first-hand audience, *The Silence of Becoming and Disappearing* (2010) created a much more intimate circle of first-hand experiences. Inevitably this is part of the experience as well, and also brings into question whether private works can be made public, and if so, how. It raises the further issue of what is lost between generations and types of transition – which is very closely related to the type of experience had with the work: first-hand vs second-hand.

The Silence of Becoming and Disappearing (2010) was not only more intimate because of the site-specificity in combination with the small scope of primary visitors, but was further personalised by the artist incorporating and responding to details of the inhabitants' homes and lives through stories that they told. These responsive echoes cannot easily be transmuted or communicated to the outside world. They are lost and lie somewhere outside the images made. They are removed from the work in its documentation.

4.4.3 Issues of register: loss in the transition between generations

After physical artworks are made we are left with the representations and memories of artworks as created by the limited group of first-hand witnesses who can provide a fragmented and highly personalized view of what the work was. Conservator Barbara Ferriani warns against 'limiting oneself to a purely material understanding of elements in a given work', stating that instead we can draw from 'theoretical, philological, and ethical aspects.'[59] She echoes the idea that an artwork is more than the sum of its materials. If we understand the temporary artwork as experience, and let the material aspect of the work go in order to reach its completion, then we still have an experience which can be passed down. The experience is shaped by the medium of the artwork. Following this, the issue that needs to be addressed is how the experience of the artwork can be passed down as it is impacted when the medium shifts, i.e. when a temporary artwork is physically unmade.

How an experience of a temporary artwork is passed down depends on the primary

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[58] Casey Hutton, 'Hannah Bertram Interview', *The Meander Journal* (June, 2013), http://themeanderjournal.com/hannah-bertram-interview/, (accessed February 27, 2015).

[59] Barbara Ferriani, 'How to Pass on an Idea', *Ephemeral Monuments: History and Conservation of Installation Art*, ed. Barbara Ferriani and Marina Puegliese (Los Angelos: Getty Publications, 2013), 122.

audience, but the various possibilities include documentation, such as photography or written accounts as well as verbal accounts. In essence, the experience needs to be recorded through some means in order to have something to pass down. The artwork and any possible future experiences cannot be passed down if the primary audience does not ingrain and record their experience and encounter with the work. If there is nothing, nothing can be passed on. This is the case for all of Goldsworthy's private works, for which he is the only primary audience, and which he chooses not to share. These works are experienced, retained by, and subsequently die with the artist.

If the primary audience does ingrain some aspect of the work through memory or photographs, these can be shared with secondary audiences. However, there is an inevitable selection bias to be wary of. As art historian Ruth Rosengarten warns, 'historical accounts are partial; memory can be fickle.'[60] Moreover, each follow-up experience of the work constructs something slightly differently. No two recollections of the same event will be exactly the same.[61] Additionally, the further down the line the experience is transmitted, for instance orally, the more authors get involved, co-constructing their own experiences from the artwork as it has been captured by the audience which came first, and then has been passed down and reconstructed by the audience who came second, and then further reconstructed by the audience who came third, *ad infinitum.* Until finally the experience of the artwork is in effect an amalgamation of experiences based on experiences handed down, together representing a fabric woven of generations of transition. As historian Heather Perry notes, 'memory is fleeting, selective, and fallible.'[62] This is not a criticism, but rather an awareness of the inevitable loss that takes place between each transition of the experience of the work, distancing each additional generation further from the original physical artwork and the first-hand experience. The contextualisation, understanding and experiences of the lost artwork are eventually an amalgamation of the interpretations passed down.

Just as the temporary artwork is physically lost, the experience of the artwork is fluid and changes with each audience member and is further distanced from the original material artwork with each generation. Neuroscientist Jonathan K. Foster, who specialises in memory, asserts, and with this echoes his predecessor Frederick Bartlett, that memory is

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[60] Ruth Rosengarten, *Between Memory and Document (Untitled Museu Coleção Berardo Book 6*, (Digital Publication: EPUB, 2013).

[61] Elizabeth F. Loftus, Bjorn Levidow and Sally Duensing, 'Who remembers best? Individual differences in memory for events that occurred in a science museum', *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, Volume 6, Issue 2, (March/April 1992): 93-107, 93.

[62] Heather R. Perry, 'History Lessons: Selling the John Dillinger Museum', Private *History in Public: Exhibition and the Settings of Everyday Life*, ed., Tammy S. Gordon, (Plymouth: AltaMira Press, 2010), 136.

constructive rather than reproductive.[63] As such memory should be understood as an amalgamation of not only our experiences, but also of our expectations and biases. Furthermore, the experience-turned-memory cannot be handed down as a stable object. Rather, memory is individual. It is, as historian Susan Crane warns, when discussing the individual nature of memory, 'linked to the brain and the body that bears it'.[64] Future audiences for temporary artworks rely on a blend of reconfigured experiences whose connection to the material work is tangential. If a temporary work is considered to exist outside its exclusive circumstances, it becomes clear that it becomes increasingly removed from what it once was.

4.4.4 What is the work outside of its exclusive circumstances?

In essence, this thesis tries to bring the temporary outside of its exclusive circumstances – which can be understood as the presence of the physical work *in situ* and its limited original physical duration. To make the temporary permanently accessible and to view the site-specific somewhere other than where it is constructed and displayed are contradictory practices. They require compromise which inevitably changes the mode of encounter, through changing the manner and space in which a work is experienced. These changes in turn also change the experience of the work itself.

Returning to Bertram's work, the poetics of her work lie in this exact kind of contradiction. Bertram creates from waste, which she shapes into artworks, which are in turn disturbed and swept up by the same motions which produced the waste to begin with. This is comparable to the paradox of having ephemeral works which in some way become permanent, as well as private works which are communicated into the public sphere. Temporary artworks cannot be owned in the traditional way as there is no long-term stable or repeatable object. Temporary artworks instead function as physical interventions working on different scales depending on the site of the installation and the intended audience. While the physical work can be documented, it cannot otherwise be physically contained.

The answer to the question of how we might see or know a temporary artwork outside of its exclusive circumstance is a kind of enigma. Very practically it amounts to being able to access and visit or revisit the work even though it no longer physically exists. In the case of all of the artists discussed in this chapter, this can occur through the photographs which have been taken to record the work and either make or keep it public

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[63] Ibid., 12

[64] Susan Crane, ed., *Museums and Memory*, (Stanford University Press, 2000), 2.

and accessible to some degree.

Another way of considering what a temporary artwork is outside of its exclusive circumstances, is to consider what the artwork ceases to be able to do. After a temporary artwork has physically disappeared, it ceases to be able to form new primary relationships with its audience. As the material work concludes, the scope of first-hand experiences becomes a set number which cannot increase, and all new experiences of the work are in fact based on experiences co-constructed from what the primary audience has passed down. The sphere in which the artwork functions also changes, provided the work is passed along to new audiences. These audiences have a different kind of access to the work.

The work also ceases to reference its environment in the same manner, as the work is no longer experienced *in situ*. This changes how the audience relates and reads the work, particularly if the work has been made in response to or in dialogue with its original location. Moreover, the material changes. The artwork outside its exclusive circumstances is either memory or a document of some sort, which provide different modes of encounter than the original material artwork. Most critically, the work ceases to be truly temporary and instead begins to flirt with contradiction. The work outside its exclusive circumstances distinctly becomes something else that continues to reference itself. These are all inevitable compromises that come from trying to continue some aspect of the life of a work that has ended. As demonstrated, the temporary artwork is not the same without its physical component. The experience of a temporary artwork changes when the work is presented in alternative forms such as documentation.

4.4.5 Experiencing the material's absence

In essence, future generations are expected to experience the work through its material absence rather than through a first-hand experience with the material work. Nevertheless, the artwork's material still shapes the audience's experience, both in its presence, and significantly, later, in its absence (which is likely to have a much larger audience).

Conservator Carol Mancusi-Ungaro warns against the assumptions made by those who have never seen the artwork in its youth.[65] In application to the temporary artwork, this could be extended to warning against those who come to know and experience the artwork via non-primary means, which includes my own position with many of the artworks discussed. The readings made depend on what has been included in

[65] Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, 'Modern and Contemporary Art: A Personal Reflection', *The GCI Newsletter* 24, No. 2 (Fall 2009), 9.

documentation, what has been recorded, and are furthermore also shaped by the gaps of what has not been recorded. The views passed on are already formed, and molded to a certain extent, which shapes how I read and consider the artworks within this research. The critical constraint posed by temporary artworks as they are experienced by non-primary audiences is that these audiences must rely on what has been passed along, and cannot supplement this by visiting the work first-hand. However, as Mancusi-Ungaro also puts forward, 'The notion that art can live only among the generation that created it would be hotly and justly debated by art historians and conservators.'[66]

In terms of the temporary artwork, it becomes a matter of understanding how an unmade temporary artwork can still in fact exist. How can something be there and not be there? Applying theory from philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, art historian Simon O'Sullivan posits that artworks can be understood beyond their representation.[67] This is a notion which is supported in this thesis, along with the idea that the temporary artwork can be understood as experience. The material nature of a temporary artwork as a transient object inverts our expectation of longevity and in doing so shapes our experience. Our experience is heightened by the known foreshadowing that the work will cease to be. The work's absence is already read in its changing material presence. However, if the artwork is more than the sum of its parts, through the absence of these parts we can continue to address the work and experience it. The life and death of the material object is not necessarily the life and death of a temporary artwork as a whole. What is lost is the work's immediacy, but what is understood is the context around the work, its framework and that the audience is presented with something that is no longer a physical and material reality. The work is thus made present and contextualised through its absence.

4.4.6 The living archive

First-hand experiences are necessarily limited to the material lifespan of a temporary artwork, after which visual and oral documentation become the only means of transferring a temporary artwork to future audiences. Those who experience a temporary artwork first-hand become responsible for the work insofar as they are the only connection between the artwork and future generations through their narration or through other forms of collecting and documenting the work. The way in which they experience and capture a temporary artwork defines it for later audiences who cannot experience the work first-hand. This has

[66] Ibid.

[67] Simon O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari Thought Beyond Representation* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 2.

problematic integral consequences, namely that the experiences of a few come to shape the artwork for what might be many, while still losing a lot of the narrative of the original artwork. If we think back to the metaphor of the primary audience as a group of unintentional archivists, we can explore the implications of how things are archived through a process of inclusion and exclusion. Whereas ideally the archivist would store everything, this is not possible, in part due to the archivist's internal bias. Additional problems the archivist faces depend on the traces of things archived. Documents needs to be correctly contextualized so that it remains clear what they refer and relate to. In addition, the fallibility of memory poses further problems. If the archivist wants to accurately transfer their experience, but is reliant on their memory, details inevitably shift. As time passes certain aspects of a particular memory fade. Furthermore, after reflecting on the experience, we may not understand it the same way five years, or even just a week down the road. The conceptual archive is imperfect in its rendering of the temporary artwork, which impacts and shapes future second-hand experiences of the work.

Naturally things are complicated even further when the archivist is no longer accessible, and all we have access to are bits and pieces from the conceptual archive. This is made clear in Bertram's series *The Silence of Becoming and Disappearing* (2010) consisting of ten works, each in a private home, where the only first-hand experiences can be accessed either through contacting the home-owners who lived with these works, which would not be an easy feat, as the artist would have to agree to pass on their contact details and there are clear privacy issues there, or by accessing what remains of these works through the few photographs taken and publicly available. The images come with little context. Knowing that the works depicted in the photographs no longer exist, alongside the fact that they are a response to their physical environment (echoing the details) as well as the residents (through referencing stories told), one cannot help but feel not just the absence of the artwork, but also an incomplete understanding of the images and the full dimension of the works. Whereas Goldworthy argues that the process of the artwork is implied within the photographic still, a lot of the context and therefore also richness is lost in photographs of Bertram's work.

There is a small portfolio which depicts images of the artist's process in the form of stencils and of her laying out the work, of the dust collected, and also of some of the final pieces *in situ*: on tiles outside, under a dining table, inside a drawer, next to someone's bed. But there is a haziness about what the site is. Who does the house where those tiles are placed at belong to? Who sits at that dining table? What else is tucked away in that drawer? Who sleeps in that bed? The full scope of how the work functions *in situ* is watered down. The fullness of the work is lost rather than handed down. The full sense of

holding one's breath and moving more gently is still not present. With the exception of some high resolution close-up photographs made for the *Kutztown Dust Project* (2014), in which the granular dust feels almost palpable, as a second-hand experience one might not grasp the delicate nature of the original artwork.

Figure 4-15 Hannah Bertram, *The Silence of Becoming and Disappearing*, 2010, dust, installation detail, private home, Australia. Image courtesy of the artist.

The physicality of the work and the implications of working with ash and dust cannot wholly be passed on through alternative modes of encounter and instead disappear with the art object. The work's fragility is not so evident from most of the images. It almost needs to be spelled out, for the disruption to be made visible in the photograph. There is one such clear image for *The Silence of Becoming and Disappearing* (2010), in which a detail on one of the floor pieces displays some light smudges and the culprit is present: a rabbit. However, further context is removed from the still image. One would require an additional narrator to further elucidate the work, the rabbit, and the aftermath. The living archive – what is handed on – is always incomplete.

4.4.7 What are the ethical and integral consequences of how this is handed on?

There is the ethical consideration of whether what is temporary should be made accessible for later non-primary audiences. This is the great heterodox of this thesis – trying to find a means of letting temporary physical works go, while still finding a way to care for the legacies of temporary artworks in order to promote future experiences. Documentation seems like a suitable compromise; however, as discussed, through making a permanent trace of the physical aspect of the work, this mitigates its evanescence and arguably also alters the experience. If part of the experience of the temporary artwork relies on the duration of the piece, removing the durational aspect changes the experience. How this is dealt with depends in part on the artist's willingness to allow for their temporary works to be disseminated.

In some cases, artists wholly oppose documentation, which limits how and if the artwork can be transferred. Tino Sehgal's body of works illustrates the challenges posed by trying to resist documentation. Although Sehgal's works are not strictly temporary artworks, given that there is no material work, he is still brought up in order to highlight the tension created by making works which are supposed to be completely ephemeral, permanent. Sehgal's works exist in the private sphere as well as the wide public sphere. With regards to the latter, parts of the work are disseminated through visual means that the artist does not condone, namely, the primary audience's use of camera phones and other recording devices to capture the artwork. Sehgal creates what he refers to as 'constructed situations' in which there is a live interaction between the artwork and the audience.[68] Sehgal's constructions are live artworks that are a combination of choreographed prompts

[68] Lauren Collins, 'The Question Artist – Tino Sehgal's provocative encounters', *The New Yorker* (August 6, 2012).

and gestures performed by various individuals alongside chance response and interaction. The works can be bought and sold, and re-performed according to the artist's instruction, which is passed along verbally, so that the work changes slightly each time it is performed. However, there is no artist-condoned documentation of the work whatsoever. What the museum or collector buys is decided and agreed upon through verbal contract, thus relying on the memory of those present to uphold the work and its integrity. Sehgal's work has been bought and experienced in this fashion by both public and private institutions. However, when the artist's work is shown in public spaces, inevitably bystanders watching the work also find ways of documenting it. Sehgal opposes the documentation of his work as he posits that the document, such as a photograph, fails to capture the full experience, displacing the real work with secondary representations of it.[69] For Sehgal, the document misses the point of the work, namely its liveness and presence.

Bertram, whose works do fit in the category of temporary artwork, acknowledges what she describes as her 'very problematic relationship with documentation' within her own work.[70] She addresses how documentation can become a means of creating perpetuity within ephemeral art practice and that it holds the potential for on-going access, but also, as an act, risks reinforcing the value that is placed on permanence over impermanence. To this point, and in line with Sehgal, it can be argued further that documentation misses the point of the work by trying to resist the essence of what shapes the experience of a temporary artwork. There is no easy answer to this. In order to carry temporary artworks forward, if only through fragments, a work still ceases to be wholly temporary. This is an inevitable compromise. Whether this compromise should be made depends in part on where the artist places the integrity of the work, and is further related to their stance on documentation and the idea of experience being handed on without having a primary experience of the original physical artwork. It also depends on the desired outcome, which for the purpose of this thesis is to explore ways of letting the physical work go, while still being able to reference the artwork and pass down experiences for future audiences.

In order to make private work open to the public, that the primary audience must transfer the artwork to a secondary audience. Given the nature of temporary artworks, by the time that a work is transferred, the physical aspect of a temporary artwork has already ceased to exist. The constraints of the work mean that it cannot be repeated. The only means of handing down the work to future audiences is therefore through experience and

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[69] S.T., 'Tino Sehgal: The Fine Art of Human Interaction', *The Economist* (July, 2012), http://www.economist.com/blogs/prospero/2012/07/tino-sehgal, (accessed March 10, 2015).

[70] Andrews, 2013.

later memory, alongside documentation. Whether there is a physical document or only a verbal discussion, the act of transferring the artwork is an act which resists the temporary nature of the work and challenges how the work is understood. Each mode of encounter shapes the way in which the artwork is accessed and also understood and experienced. When viewing images of Bertram's installations, it needs to be clear that they are just images which relay a work that no longer exists. The images, though highly aesthetic and arguably also displaying an artistry in their own right, are not in fact the artwork. The framework in which the artwork is presented (which consists of duration, site, and material, as they relate to the artwork) thus shapes the kind of experience the viewer has – whether they are aware of the absence of the artwork, or instead see the document as a whole, stable and complete entity – the opposite of a temporary artwork.

4.5 Conclusion

While the thesis itself serves as a guide for how to think about and approach temporary artworks, this chapter specifically posits that a temporary artwork can be understood as an experience, tracing the roots of this idea in Dewey's seminal work 'Art as Experience'. Dewey proposes that the artwork and the viewer are complicit in forming an experience, which he conceives of as the essential function of an artwork. The viewer co-constructs this experience with personal input and engagement, which is elicited through what the physical object does *within* experience. In application to the temporary artwork, this means that the framework surrounding the work, namely its durability, and the site and sphere in which the work is situated, shape the way the work is experienced, and therefore what the viewer reads, so-to-speak, reads from the work.

Returning to the example of my encounter with Peter Drew's street series *Home* (2012), the experience of the works is shaped by various factors. The wheat-pasted images were placed in outdoor situations, where they inevitably became weathered by the elements. The location played on my awareness of the works' material vulnerability. The works' location also impacted how the works were encountered, namely by chance, in a public location. The works were widely accessible and not specifically constructed to relate to me as an individual consumer, but rather touched upon broader themes of community and the democratization of art. Additionally, the 'mode of encounter' can also be seen to define the experience.

Two types of experience have been considered in detail – the first-hand experience which entails a primary relationship and encounter with the original physical object, and the second-hand encounter which is a mediated experience that has no primary relationship

to the original material object. The mode of encounter impacts the factors that shape the experience of a temporary artwork, namely the register of the work, the conscious sense of duration, and the primacy and sphere of the work. If I had not seen Drew's work first-hand, I would have been less conscious of the work's duration and placement and how it interacted with its site of installation. The second-hand experience depends on the first-hand experience. As the second-hand experience does not have a primary relationship to the original material artwork, it requires some mediating connection, someone who has recorded the work in some form in order to pass along a visual or verbal document to a secondary audience. Without any primary audience, which as we have seen, can be as small as one individual, perhaps just the artist, there can be no secondary audience. The first-hand experience is a witnessing of the actual artwork, whereas the second-hand experience faces the work's absence, encountering only a memento. The relationship between the two types of experience is thus defined by the presence and absence of the transient object. These two relationships illustrate and make evident a different dynamic.

In discussing the types of experience, the significance of the private and public spheres is clarified. The private artwork has an even smaller primary audience, and the work often relates to the viewer in a more intimate way, as illustrated by Bertram's use of the audience's narrative within her work, *The Silence of Becoming and Disappearing* (2010). Whereas more public works reach a larger primary audience, they lose some of this more specialized personal narrative, as the work is not tailored to the audience in the same way. Furthermore, when private work is made public, this is a switch from first-hand experience to second-hand, which changes the register and results in the inevitable loss between generations of transition. The first-hand and second-hand experiences, as discussed, relate differently to the original artwork. Moving the experience of an artwork outside its exclusive circumstances and away from the primary relationship inevitably changes the context of the work in question.

Leading from this, the process of material unmaking can be understood as a part of the artwork consciously used to inform the viewer's experience. It is ultimately argued that temporary artworks renegotiate the role of the material and the object – framing the viewer's relation to both. Although different experiences relate to the same artwork, the mode of encounter defines the proximity between the audience and the artwork and changes how the viewer engages with the work by shifting the parameters in which the work is seen.

Through understanding the relationship between an artwork, its audience, and experience, and the sphere in which these relationships are shaped, we gain awareness of the factors that construct the experience of a temporary artwork. It becomes possible to

consider a means of eliciting future experiences, though with the understanding that they are distinct. In order to imagine a future for temporary artworks, experience can not only be used as a tool which connects the primary audience to the work in its physical presence, but also provides a means for secondary audiences to encounter the unmade material work in its later inevitable physical absence.

Chapter 5

The Performance of Loss

5.1 Introduction

Temporary artworks by necessity play upon a theme of loss, but the further significance of this loss, and whether a work is to be read as mournful, or joyful, or indeed something entirely different, varies. Acknowledging the breadth of associations that lie within loss is critical, in order to avoid an automatic misreading or flattening of the work. Using loss as a universal category is complicated, and a loaded term to be applied with caution and specificity. Categorising temporary artworks as being framed around loss makes assumptions which further influence any reading of the artwork in question. There is variability in the significance and meanings imbued by the artists in temporary artworks. They are all physically lost, but interact with the theme of loss differently. Two question to be asked, therefore, are, what the place of loss is and what a discussion of loss can bring to our discussion of temporary artworks.

'Loss' is used here as meaning the state of being without something that one has had and includes the state of being deprived of something. The durational engagement referred to throughout this research is used to mean the period of existence or persistence which continues to make experience possible and to evoke it. With both these definitions in mind, it is apparent that the tradeoff in conserving temporary artworks is as follows. A temporary artwork must play itself out, which involves its material unmaking. By necessity

this means that future audiences will experience the artwork in question without the material object. This loss promotes a different kind of relationship towards, and experience of, a temporary artwork. There is the literal material loss, in which a temporary artwork is without its original physical form, as well as the loss of primary experience, which is never available to future audiences. This loss is not a loss for all of the stakeholders involved. It is for instance not necessarily a loss for the artist, and perhaps also not for the primary audience, who have experienced the artwork in question first-hand. It is, however, a loss for all future audiences, who will never experience an unmade temporary artwork first-hand and are therefore always kept at arm's length.

The themes of loss, presence, absence, and tools of memory and documentation are explored and unpacked in this chapter through applying them to examples, including a discussion around the 2009 group exhibition *For a Limited Time Only*, held at the Highland Park Art Center, Highland Park, Illinois in the United States, Swiss artist Urs Fischer's (b. 1966) work *Untitled* (2011), Serbian performance artist Marina Abramović's (b. 1946) performance *The Artist is Present* (2009), as well through an analysis of Scottish performer and director Fiona Templeton's (b. 1951) event *Bodies of Memory*, held at Tate Britain in 2012. All these works and events explore how to stage temporality.

What will be made clear is that, pragmatically, an exhibition of temporary artworks, which no longer exist in their original material form, would in fact be an exhibition or museum without material artworks. An exhibition or museum of temporary artworks which no longer physically exist can instead, as posited and developed here, present connections to the unmade material artworks. In doing so, memory and documentation are presented in lieu of the unmade temporary artworks, in order to enable new experiences and promote a durational engagement. The novel aspect of this, as developed in this research, is the focus on contextualizing and clarifying absence. A temporary artwork is experienced as present through its material object, and after its material unmaking can and should be experienced as absent. However, these two experiences (presence and absence) are unified in the performance and experience of loss, as shall be explained. As such, loss, and continuing to manage the perpetuity of loss, should be the focus of conservation efforts for temporary artworks where the physical aspect of the work inevitably becomes absent.

5.2 The performance and performativity of temporary artworks

Notions of performance and performativity have become increasingly intertwined in contemporary discussions of art practice. Notably, in 2011 the Tate dedicated a research

initiative 'Performance and Performativity' to discuss the interlinked concepts from both a historical and theoretical perspective. The significance and applicability of the concept of 'performance' and 'performativity' in relation to temporary artworks will be made clear after first defining how they are used in this context. Performance as used in the context of this thesis refers to carrying out an action. Performativity as used in this context relates to an artistic expression that constitutes the performance of a specified act by virtue of its form and presentation. An artwork that is performative can therefore be said to be performing.

The origin of the concept of performativity finds its roots in speech act theorist John Langshaw Austin's work 'How to Do Things with Words', who built the idea that a performative utterance changes reality, whereas a descriptive utterance merely describes it.[1] Specifically, this means that a performative utterance accomplishes the action that it announces, such as 'shame on you' or 'I swear'.[2]

The performative is applied differently throughout disciplines, including anthropology, performance studies and cultural studies. Here it is used in applying art historian Dorothea von Hantelmann's notion of how the artwork 'acts' within its ritualistic space of display, investigating the framework of behaviour set up by the artist.[3] The implication is that the artwork is not only performed, but also read within the construct of a social ritual. The concepts of performance and the performative are increasingly applied to non-performance arts, as can be seen in Von Hantelmann's investigation of how an artwork 'acts' within the ritualistic space of the museum.[4] Von Hantelmann, who largely builds on ideas of the performance and the performative as developed by sociologist and gender researcher Judith Butler, places the power of acting within an artwork itself. Von Hantelmann states,

> The model of performativity ... places the main emphasis on the conventions of its production, presentation and reception, [it] shows how each individual work of art helps to produce these conventions and how, in so doing, possibilities are created for changing them.[5]

Using this model becomes a means of recognizing the full scope of factors which shape how a work of art is read, but also sees that an artwork performs within a setting, and in

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[1] John Langshaw Austin, *How to Do Things with Words, 2nd edition*, ed., J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, [1962] 1975).

[2] Ibid.

[3] Dorothea von Hantelmann, *How to Do Things With Art* (Zürich: diaphanes 2007).

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

doing so plays upon and reaffirms the structure in which it is placed. For instance, an artwork in a white cube gallery performs the role of the artwork by the manner in which it is displayed within the white cube gallery. The exhibiting space and its formal structure clarify that what is presented is indeed an artwork, while the artwork situates the gallery and formal structure and behavior and affirms the role of the gallery.

Both the concepts of performance and performativity are relevant and pertain to temporary artworks in that they clarify the significance of the presence of the artwork and that this presence actively does something, posits an engagement which is made possible through the material aspect of the work as well as its positioning within a space of display. Understanding the significance of the performance and performativity of a temporary artwork, as well as how an artwork might continue to perform through memory and documentation after the material aspect of the work is unmade, posits a way of continuing a key component of a temporary artwork, namely its performance, which shapes how it is experienced.

In application to temporary artworks, the rhetoric of material finitude can be understood as a performative tool, bringing to the forefront the realities that temporary artworks speak of – through a language of literal physical loss, temporary artworks are able to discuss loss. Within temporary artworks material unmaking lies a swansong proclamation of their physical finitude. These performances which make the temporary legible through creating material things, which literally enact the themes that they speak of. If we take a look at examples of temporary artworks, such as the group exhibition *For a Limited Time Only*, curated in 2009 by Olga Stefan, the prevailing sentiment of participating artists was the recognition that '*all things* are ephemeral'.[6] All of the displayed works were created as temporary artworks to exist for the duration of the show. They addressed the theme of temporality differently, but all participating artists created works which had some inherent fragility in their physical structure – a performativity pertaining to the works' intended and inevitable performance of loss – be it through choice of material (like participating artist Wendy Kveck's structures made out of paint and marshmallow fluff which wilted, rotted and oozed) or application and assemblage (such as fellow participating artist Annie Heckman's stacked domes constructed of glow-in-the-dark bones left to collapse like a castle of cards, or Jess Witte's delicate and highly fracturable birdseed doilies). Nothing was to be left, and the plausibility of creating and unmaking through a process of artistic annihilation was explored to its fullest. Each work

[6] Exhibited March 9 – 29, 2009, as a group exhibition at The Art Center - Highland Park, IL, USA with works from artists: Marci Rubin, Jess Witte, Wendy Kveck, Annie Heckman, and Shawn Stucky; Quote taken from Kathryn Born, 'Art is not Eternal', *Artslant,* (September 9, 2009).

shown was created in such a manner as to both proclaim and act out the inevitable, in short to perform, the loss of the physical work. As exemplified by the works comprising *For a Limited Time Only* (2009), temporary artworks dramatically change traditional notions of an artwork by destabilising the material and essentially attacking the material object's perceived significance through its eradication. This enables the viewer to concentrate on the temporary artwork beyond its material representation.

Figure 5-1 Wendy Kveck, (no name) Installation part of *For A Limited Time Only*, *2009*, The Art Center at Highland Park, Curated by Olga Stefan, Highland Park, Illinois. Image courtesy of Olga Stefan.

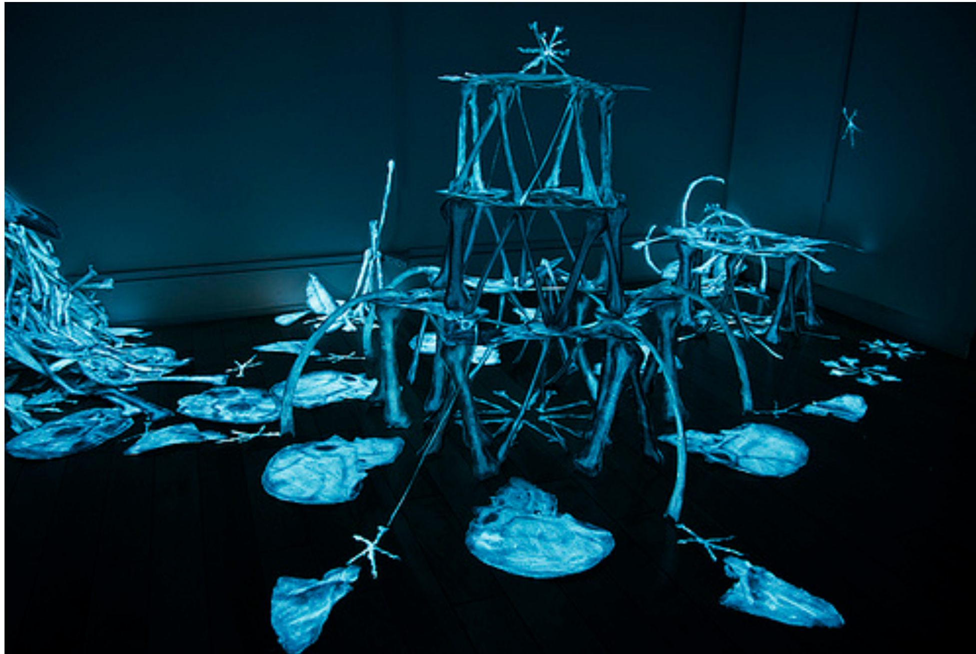

Figure 5-2 Annie Heckmann, (no name) Installation part of *For A Limited Time Only*, *2009*, The Art Center at Highland Park, Curated by Olga Stefan, Highland Park, Illinois. Image courtesy of Olga Stefan.

Figure 5-3 Jess Witte, (no name) Installation part of *For A Limited Time Only*, *2009*, The Art Center at Highland Park, Curated by Olga Stefan, Highland Park, Illinois. Image courtesy of Olga Stefan.

In line with the theme of the group exhibition, Stefan printed the catalogue with edible ink on wafer paper and requested visitors to dispose and/or consume it upon reading. *For a Limited Time Only* (2009), as described by Stefan,

> concentrate[d] on the urgency of the work, and encourage[d] the artists, as well as audiences, to consider these projects philosophically, focusing primarily on the idea of the work as temporary experience rather than artistic mark, and memory rather than document.[7]

In a time and, to push this statement further, in a Western culture where material obsolescence prevails, temporary artworks renegotiate the material object through its physical creation, display and destruction. Continuing on a line of questioning first raised by the early *avant-garde*, temporary artworks, such as those presented in *For a Limited Time Only* (2009)*,* ask questions about the significance of material and enable us to think more broadly about what it means for an artwork to endure. It is through its framework of performative finitude that the temporary artwork inscribes itself with its bounds and limitations.

Art historical and conservation training for ephemeral art such as temporary art inevitably borrows ideas from the perspective of performance studies in order to engage with different ways of thinking about the meaning behind visual expression, duration and presentation. Temporary artworks, such *Untitled* (2011) which Swiss artist Urs Fischer (b. 1966) made for the fifty-fourth Venice Biennale, confront this inevitability of material unmaking head on from inception onwards. Fischer's contribution consisted of three burning candles shaped as life-sized wax replicas of his office chair, his friend Rudolf Stingel, and of Giambologna's sculpture *Rape of the Sabine Women* (1583). All the figures contained wicks which were lit and over the duration of the exhibition continued to burn and melt. The significance of Fischer's work was most eloquently discussed by *Guardian* writer Jonathan Jones, who described the work after the fact of seeing it:

> Fischer's candle-man haunted me later when I was walking the decaying streets of Venice. It will haunt me for a long time. It is a beautiful, funny, frightening emblem of time's fatal arrow.[8]

The tension of *Untitled* (2011) lay in experiencing its inevitable loss and the subsequent memory created by something that was, and cannot be repeated – a lost form, a lost experience.

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[7] Olga Stefan, *For a Limited Time Only, group show 2009*, Curatorial, http://olgaistefan.wordpress.com/past-projects/for-a-limited-time-only-group-show-2009/, (accessed December 2, 2013).

[8] Jonathan Jones, 'Time flies at the Venice Biennale', *The Guardian* (June 7, 2011), http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2011/jun/07/time-venice-biennale-marclay-fischer, (accessed January 29, 2014).

The conservator for such a work of art must ask, 'What references keep the work alive?' The physical work is no longer the purpose, exists for a limited time, and is unreproducible – so what are we left with? What does the conservator have to work with? And so, as encapsulated by art historian Vera Lúcia Carmo 'the object of conservation ceased to exist, leaving only the object of exhibition.'[9] In other words, the material object is no longer the point, but rather, as clarified here, its limited performance and the message a work carries is. The rise of temporary artworks has displaced the probability of physical longevity and instead placed a focus on experiencing artworks over the limited course of their exhibition. If the material objects cannot be conserved, this ultimately presents the question of how to conserve the performance which lies at their crux.

The performance of a temporary artwork plays on the tension between the themes of presence and absence, which are inevitably written into the artworks through their indefinite material structure. This idea of presence relates in particular to the retrospective and performance *The Artist is Present* (2009) by Serbian performance artist Marina Abramović (b. 1946). This exhibition, which took place at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, presented roughly 50 works spanning four decades of Abramović's practice which were re-performed by other artists, alongside a new work in which Abramović sat on a chair by a table, with an empty chair in front of her, inviting visitors, as instructed on a small plaque, to 'sit silently with the artist for a duration of your choosing'. The audience thus became part of the artwork, presenting a kind of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The exhibition as a whole raised issues of 'the live', and of immediacy, and touched upon how we keep performance alive. Working with Abramović's rhetoric, performance art must be kept alive through re-performance, and this is how the artist remains present.

Temporary artworks, though not strictly performance pieces, can nevertheless, as has been discussed here, be seen to perform. In doing so they also involve a kind of immediacy and liveness. However, unlike Abramović's plea to keep the artist present through the re-performance of works, temporary artworks are created only once and not re-performed. Instead, any retrospective becomes an exploration of something which is no longer there. Riffing off Abramović's ideas, one could say that a retrospective of temporary artworks would have to be held under the notion, 'the artwork is not present'. This thesis proposes that through creating a show without the material objects of unmade temporary artworks, and through contextualising the fragmentary nature of memories and documents, what is made apparent is the absence of the artworks. This absence is a critical

[9] Vera Lúcia Carmo, 'The Possibility of Everything: [Re]presenting Impermanent Art', paper presented at the conference *Curating Art History: Dialogues between museum professionals and academics*, 8th May 2014, University of Birmingham, 2.

part of the life of a temporary artwork as it is part of its inevitable reality. The absence is part of the performance of the theme of loss, specifically the ultimate loss of the physical object. What is being developed is the idea that we do not need the material object in order to discuss the work or even to experience it. Moreover, we cannot have the material object long-term if it is indeed a temporary artwork. However, the trade-off is that how a temporary artwork is known and experienced inevitably changes. This is a stark move away from the notion of 'original presence' which permeates exhibitions such as Abramović's. Whereas Abramović proposes that artworks, specifically performances, are kept "present" and "alive" only through their embodiment, a temporary artwork cannot be embodied or re-performed or recreated in the manner which Abramović supports. Rather, temporary artworks need to physically play themselves out, and it is only their performance of loss which can be captured. After a temporary artwork is physically lost, this aspect of the artwork is no longer present. It is through this absence, and the acknowledgement of this absence, that we can continue to engage with the work.

Just as performance art can be said to rely heavily on what art historian Hanna Hölling discusses as 'immediate experience and lapse of time', we can see a comparative reliance with temporary artworks.[10] A temporary artwork has change inbuilt and relies on physical transformations that lend it narrative in the same way that traditional movement does. Temporary artworks can be said to be performing, through the literal material enactment of their message, and like the other performing arts fall prey to an array of comparable collecting and conservation problems, including the difficult tasks of trying to contain the process, and extend the finite.

A temporary artwork thus defies the notion that 'the art object itself constitutes the principle record of the creative act' as is the case with more traditional artworks.[11] Instead, the contingency of the artwork, comparable to performance art, lies somewhere more elusive, between the material performance and the immaterial experience of the work – document and memory alone are not the work. Instead, a temporary artwork is to be understood as the physical object, the idea, *and* the process or performance, read from its beginning to its end through its movement, until it is gone, much like any other performance. In this sense, temporary art is arguably an equivalent of performance. It offers a comparable performative and finite engagement with space and similarly brings up

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[10] Hanna Hölling, 'On The Afterlife of Performance' (2010), http://www.deappel.nl/dox/exhibition_docs/22/ontheafterlifeofperformancehannaholling.pdf, (accessed July 1, 2014), 2.

[11] Jan Marontate, 'Rethinking Permanence and Change in Contemporary Cultural Preservation Strategies', *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* 34, no. 4 (2005), 291.

critical issues of objecthood, liveness, presence and absence in art.

In particular, when considering temporary artworks, where destruction is inevitably impending, the focus of the work is not necessarily on its installation, but rather the experience and tension created by the work's unmaking. Arguably, the viewer is left with some aspect of the work after it is gone; in the case of *Untitled* (2011), the work can be said, as Jones did, to continue to haunt the viewer, precisely because the work no longer exists.[12] It is *only* through this haunting, in memory, and possible documentation, that an artwork that has physically ceased to exist, continues to exist. Conservator Christian Scheidemann makes a case for this kind of experience, claiming that '…a work of art often is considerably more than just the components of its material in the consciousness of the average viewer.'[13] With the changed dynamic of twentieth century art practice, artworks are no longer understood as confined to or solely existing in their physical shells; rather, as exemplified by temporary artworks, the artwork increasingly lies in the experience and the framework in which it 'moves' and is read. Temporary artworks lie somewhere between object and performance and exist in their original material form for a limited time only. After the material performance is over and the artwork has played itself out, memory and documentation can continue this performance of loss, albeit differently. They can be used to frame the absent artwork and actively forge a relationship between audience and artwork.

5.2.1 The performance of loss

In exploring the theme of loss in the works discussed, it is clear that memories and documents of these works should not necessarily be pared down as elegies. It is easy to memorialise temporary works and read them as mournful *memento mori*, but there is no universal temporary artwork. The temporary feature that shapes a work is applied to different ends. The inevitable inexistence of the work is in some cases a communication with the space it inhabits (if an artwork can indeed be said to inhabit a space), such as with Richard Wright's murals. It may be political, as with Kara Walker's sphinx and melting sugar boys, but it might also simply be a feature of celebration, as with Dieter Roth's joyfully rotting *Inseln*, or indeed a necessary part of the work's commission, as with Anna Schuleit's work *Bloom*. An understanding of how and why an artwork is lost can bring us closer to experiencing an artwork as the artist has intended, and continuing to (re)present it.

[12] Jones.

[13] Christian Scheidemann, 'Authenticity: How to get there?', *Art, Conservation and Authenticities: Material, Concept, Context* proceedings of the international conference held at the University of Glasgow, 12-14 September 2007, Erma Hermens and Tina Fiske, eds. (London: Archetype Publications, 2009), 9.

Though a temporary artwork may be physically absent, as a performance of loss manages to sustain a critical part of its structure and provides a basis for subsequent readings of the work in question.

5.2.2 The artwork's career and biography

Although a temporary artwork is necessarily physically here and then gone, it can be argued that these different states present different parts of the artwork's career. The notion that an artwork has a career, or indeed a so-called trajectory, is borrowed from sociologist and philosophers Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe.[14] The arguments surrounding the artwork's 'career' suggest that we should understand an artwork as ever-changing, with multiple dimensions that make up its context and how the work in question is to be understood and experienced.

In order to think of ways that we might give the temporary artwork a future, it is useful to apply the idea of the artwork as having a career which stretches across different times and contexts, and also spans differences within the artwork itself. This implicitly goes hand in hand with the notion of multiple states of authenticities, as discussed in the previous chapter, a concept supported and developed by conservator Salvador Muñoz-Viñas, among others.[15] Muñoz-Viñas specifically argues that the concept of authenticity is an umbrella term used to cover a variety of other notions, including needs, preferences, values and meanings. The resulting implication of acknowledging multiple authenticities involves seeing artworks as multiplicitous and changing according to context and the eye and knowledge of the beholder.

Philosopher and art historian Renée van de Vall, in discussing the artwork's trajectory, adds the implicit concept of the work as having a biography which layers the work, seeing it at different stages, and this in turn provides a useful added dimension which recognizes the storyline of the artwork and that it changes across time and context.[16] It should be noted that the notion of objects having a biography is derived from anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, who first applied this term, proposing that artworks pass

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[14] 'A work of art — no matter the material of which it is made — has a trajectory or, to use another expression popularised by anthropologists, a career.' Bruno Latour, and Adam Lowe, 'The migration of the aura, or How to explore the original through its facsimiles,' *Switching Codes: Thinking Through Digital Technology in the Humanities and the* Arts, ed., Thomas Bartscherer and Roderick Coover (University Of Chicago Press, 2011), 278.

[15] Salvador Muñoz-Viñas, *Contemporary Theory of Conservation* (London: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005).

[16] Renée van de Vall et al. 'Managing Change' Reflections on a Biographical Approach to Contemporary Art Conservation', paper for *ICOM-CC: 16th Triennial Conference, Lisbon* (19-23 September 2011), 6.

through 'different regimes of value' e.g. the artist's studio, collector's house or museum.[17] It is critical that we understand where the artwork lies as we discuss it, as this informs what we might say of the work and how we might treat it.[18] Barry Munitz, President of the J. Paul Getty Trust, addresses this idea, framing it as follows, 'the creation of a work of art is only the beginning of its life. From then on, it changes.'[19] The idea of the artwork as a dynamic and changing body is further supported by art theorists, including Vivian van Saaze, who builds on this idea to describe the artwork as something other than a static object.[20] This concept that artworks are not static – one might even say in motion – is particularly evident with temporary artworks if we think of their performance which includes the process of material making and unmaking.

Following both the idea of artworks as having careers (or trajectories) and biographies, it is understood that the artwork is not static, but instead goes through 'changes in its physical state, use, and social, cultural and historical context'.[21] These changes must be understood as inherent parts of the life of the artwork. An artwork's career represents the changes the work undergoes, while its biography denotes that all the different stages are equally part of the lives of artworks. Note that this does not mean that all changes are possible or permissible. Though a work is multifarious, this should be informed by the artist's intent, the work's context and place.[22] These various considerations clarify what is indeed permissible and possible. The concept of good care is forever juggling the intentions of different stakeholders and holding them up against the artwork in question.

The consequences of embracing the concept of an artwork as having a career and a biography are that we do not have to think of conservation as a means of making the unmade object re-appear, but rather a way of extending a temporary artwork, in such a way

[17] Arjun Appadurai, 'Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value', *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed., Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986): 3-63, 4. Other theorists who used and developed the concept of the biography include: Igor Kopytoff, 'The cultural biography of things: Commoditization as a process', *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986): 3-63; Linda Merrill, *The Peacock Room. A cultural biography* (Washington: The Smithsonian Institute, 1998); Janet Hoskins, 'Agency, biography and objects', *Handbook of material culture*, ed., C. Tilley et al. (London: SAGE Publications. 2006): 74–84; Latour and Lowe.

[18] Bilsky discusses the important of locating explain the art object 'where we locate the work of art affects significantly the kinds of statements that we can make about it' in 'The Significance of Locating the Art Object', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Jun., 1953): 531-536, 536.

[19] Barry Munitz, 'Foreward,' *Mortality Immortality? The Legacy of 20th-Century Art*, ed., Miguel Angel Corzo (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 1999), p. vii.

[20] Vivian van Saaze, *Doing Artworks: A Study into the Presentation and Conservation of Installation Artworks* (Maastricht: Universiteit Maastricht, 2009), 28.

[21] Renée van de Vall et al.

[22] Mary McGrath, 'Material Matters: The Conservation of Modern Art', *Circa*, No. 109 (Autumn, 2004): 50-53, 51.

that harnesses its mutable character. As a result, a temporary artwork's trajectory can be understood as possibly extending past its material state with a biography that includes more than the material object. If we consider artist Richard Wright's murals, for instance, the artist's works, such as *No Title* (wall painting) (2009) are about space and the viewer's interaction with this space. The space and the experience which relate to the mural continue to exist after the mural is covered and thus unmade. The memory and documents of *No Title* (wall painting) (2009) can be seen as extensions of the artwork and are therefore to be considered part of the work's career and biography.

An exhibition which makes clear that the unmade object is not present, but nonetheless engages with fragments left behind, would begin to demonstrate the varied identities and moments of a lost temporary artwork, which are complex and multifaceted and ultimately help the audience try to come close to the ineffable. Through recognising that a temporary artwork is indeed more than the sum of its physical parts and has a career which might span past them, we are able to conceptualise a future for these works, which does not in fact infringe upon their integrity. This is critical as it holds the key to untangling the seeming oxymoron of trying to preserve the temporary. If we recognise that a temporary artwork's biography and career can extend past its physical state, this provides a crucial means to continue a durational engagement with a lost artwork that continues to contextualise the work's theme of inevitable loss. If we consider what the status of a work is after it has physically disappeared, it becomes evident that the ephemeral nature of this art only strengthens its connection with memory, which is where one could say that a temporary artwork eventually resides after it is physically lost.

5.3 Memory as a tool

As part of a larger discussion on lost artworks, curator Jennifer Mundy of the Tate, who worked at length on the innovative exhibition *The Gallery of Lost Art* and subsequent publication *Lost Art: Missing artworks of the twentieth century*, describes the types of works this research focuses on, which fall under a much bigger umbrella of both lost and transient artworks as performative works that live on solely in memory and documentation.[23] It is worth noting that the Tate employs the term loss to denote a similar understanding, namely, the physical disappearance of works which can therefore no longer

[23] The Tate initially hosted and curated *The Gallery of Lost Art* which it described as an 'immersive, online exhibition that told the stories of artworks that had disappeared',

http://www.tate.org.uk/about/projects/gallery-lost-art, (accessed May 5, 2015).

be visited in a traditional primary way.[24] The significance of the Tate exhibition and subsequent publication lies in Mundy's emphasis on the additional tension created by a work's short shelf-life which leaves a deep impression, resulting in memory.[25]

Artists engage with memory in different ways. Some artists do not consciously engage with it at all. However, there is a certain inevitability of engaging with memory on some level when thinking about temporary artworks, as memory seems like a necessary by-product of any engagement with an artwork. In this sense memory can become a tool to continue to engage with an artwork which is no longer physically present. It offers a way of discussing temporary artworks well into the future, through providing a reference point that simultaneously acknowledges and anchors them.

It is significant that memory is shaped by those who guard it. As noted in the previous chapter, and emphasized in memory theory, memory is reconstructive, not reproductive. Both in forming memory or passing it down, perfect mimesis is an impossibility. An artwork is experienced differently by individual viewers, and further impacted by their relation and engagement towards the work – primary or secondary as well as the social and cultural baggage which informs their experiences in general. Memory is therefore a selective and interpretive process.[26] Accordingly, how a temporary artwork is presented both during its material manifestation, and after, will result in varied experiences and memories. Some of these experiences and memories will likely show common threads, and potentially form what could be considered a collective memory of a work.

While Mundy considers the inevitable continuation of transient works in the two forms of memory and documentation, she does not elaborate upon its significance within conservation, despite the nature of the exhibition and publication. The implication of using memory and documentation as possible conservation tools will be discussed in what follows.

Temporary artworks defy the notion that 'the art object itself constitutes the principle record of the creative act', as is the case with more traditional artworks.[27] Instead, the contingency of temporary artworks lies somewhere more elusive. The question that is raised is what is the status of an artwork which no longer physically exists. If we agree that a temporary artwork does indeed have a career or trajectory and biography, and that an artwork is more than the sum of its parts, this creates a path from which to postulate

[24] Jennifer Mundy, *Lost Art*, (London: Tate Publishing 2013).

[25] Ibid., 203.

[26] Jonathan K. Foster, *Memory: A Very Short Introduction* , (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 6.

[27] Marontate, 291.

that a temporary artwork can continue to exist in some form, even after it has lost its material form. It is proposed here that a temporary artwork continues to exist in memory and that this becomes a viable conservation tool. Indeed, in line with memory theory, art historian Susan Crane notes that it is also 'an act of thinking of things in their absence'.[28]

Where many artists have ambiguous feelings about the practice of documenting temporary works, memory is an inevitable by-product of a temporary artwork. An artist creating temporary artworks can at times be said to consciously employ the anticipation of memory as part of the artwork. Memory forms a path to engagement, even if there is no longer a physical artwork. This engagement is often at the crux of temporary artworks, which relies as much on their physical object, as the space and context in which they are placed, and the audience's individual contribution and interaction. This becomes evident in artist statements around creating temporary artworks, such as English artist Catherine Bertola (b. 1976), who works with ashes and dust in a manner comparable to Hannah Bertram. Bertola describes her work as focused on 'reanimating space, providing a way for people to start imagining. I suppose I'm interested in bringing things to life, retelling stories.'[29] A temporary artwork becomes a storytelling vehicle where the material object forms gateways to story arcs of experience and later memories. However, although a temporary artwork provides the memory, it leaves no object. This brings to light the problem of trying to remember without an object, which is where documentation, as shall be discussed later, comes in.

5.3.1 The viewer's role

The focus on the viewer's first-hand experience of the artwork arises in the 1960s.[30] Significance is placed on the decentralisation of the object where attention moves from the art object to the viewer's consciousness of the work. All those who come into contact with the work become interpreters of the work. This interactivity is echoed further by museologist Susan Pearce, who describes viewers of contemporary art as 'actors in the story', charged with the contextualisation and future experiences of the work.[31] Pearce's research, which focuses on human relationships with the artefact world and the nature and process of collecting, is insightful in illustrating the significance of the viewer's role. One

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[28] Crane, 2.

[29] Laura Mansfield, 'Through the Looking Glass. Catherine Bertola at The Whitworth', *Creative Tourist* (2010), http://www.creativetourist.com/articles/art/manchester/through-the-looking-glass-catherine-bertola-at-the-whitworth/, (accessed, June 6, 2014).

[30] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: a critical history* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 130.

[31] Susan M., Pearce, 'Objects as meaning; or narrating the past,' *Interpreting Objects and Collection*, ed. Susan M. Pearce (London: Routledge, 1994), 28.

might say that the viewer becomes a collaborator in the work, participatory in recognising the tension that the artist promotes with the work's limited timespan. Artist Anya Gallaccio, whose work has been discussed in previous sections, specifically lists the viewer as crucial witness and collaborator of her ephemeral works.'[32] The work not only performs, but the viewer becomes a complicit party in acknowledging the performance and feeding into the narrative of the work. If we return to Von Hantelmann's model of an artwork's performance and apply it to temporary artworks, it must to be noted that the audience has to be seen as a critical part of the framework which reads, confirms, and also validates both an artwork's performativity and the space in which it performs. This dynamic relationship becomes apparent in temporary artworks as the visitors' experience is implicit and staged by the work's performance.[33] As a result of their experience of the work, the audience forms ideas and memories, thus retaining some kind of intangible document of the work. The lingering memories, which lie with the viewers, could be considered an extension of the work's career and are therefore a potential conceptual tool to be used in presenting the artwork after it is physically gone. It is a means through which the theme of loss is contextualised – the memory makes apparent what is missing – that the artwork is not present. Though the actual artwork is lost, the memory of it keeps the work active and accessible and retrievable to a certain degree. It is only through forgetting that the full work is lost and ceases to be. This in turn posits the visitor as an unintentional archivist of sorts who carries the work forth. The presence of the initial audience is important in order to experience the original artwork and archive its memory. A temporary artwork's continuation therefore relies and is shaped by the experience of the primary audience.

5.3.2 The living archive

If we think of temporary artworks as living on in memory after their material loss, and carried by the audience members who have become a group of unintentional archivists of the artwork that no longer is, we might come to think of these archivists collectively as holding stock in an intangible and living archive. What one is left with is an archive of memories kept accessible and active through the living.

The notion of a living archive has been applied in other related arts contexts, notably by the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, the Netherlands. The museum created a

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[32] Anya Gallaccio, ' 'Anya Gallaccio' – Artists Talking, exposing contemporary visual artists' practice', *A-N The Artist's Information* Company (November 2000),

http://www.an.co.uk/artists_talking/artists_stories/single/59555, (accessed April 10, 2014).

[33] Pasidi 2013.

series of exhibitions under the title *Living Archive*, which ran from 5 May 2005 through 8 November 2009. The exhibition series was curated from the museum's own archives in collaboration with other museum archives in order to participate in the dialogue of contemporary archiving processes. The living archive in the context of the Van Abbemuseum exhibitions refers to the use of archival material put into a new context.

In this thesis, the living archive is used to denote the memories carried by the sum of individual audience members who have experienced a temporary artwork. The living archive constitutes living memories. These memories together, stored away and kept alive by various individuals, present the living archive. It is in this living archive that temporary artworks can be (re)visited, through the sharing and passing along of these memories, after the works have ceased to physically exist.

Traditionally the archive is understood as a physical institution where original paper-based documents and manuscripts are deposited, often in conjunction with another institution such as a museum.[34] Furthermore, Merewether establishes the foundation of trust presupposed in the process of creating and consulting archives.[35] We collect and collate information and objects in order to tell the stories of who we are, and their presence helps 'to establish a dominion over time' which we trust and which can be revisited for future research.[36]

To an art historian, the archive is alluring, because alongside the original artwork, (in the case of temporary artworks, one might say alongside the absence of the original artwork) it holds the key to contextualising the artwork, storing relevant information and enabling future access. It presupposes access to 'authenticity', thus bringing us closer to some sort of 'truth'. This coincides with the cultural power assigned to collecting bodies which are presumed powers of authority, such as the museum.[37] As further assessed by art historian Irving Velody, and in line with fellow art historian Charles Merewether, 'appeals to ultimate truth, adequacy, and plausibility in the work of the humanities and social sciences rest on archival presuppositions.'[38] We tell and retell our stories through the things we store away, and there is the beguiling notion that 'the archive grounds claims of truth,

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[34] Judit Bodor, '*Archives in motion* - 'approaches, perspectives, interlinking'', http://www.artpool.hu/Recenzio/Interarchive.html, (accessed May 4, 2014).

[35] Charles Merewether, 'Introduction', *The Archive: Documents of Contemporary Art,* ed., Charles Merewether (London: The Whitechapel gallery & Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2006), 10.

[36] Jean Beaudrillard, 'The System of Collecting', [1968] *The Cultures of Collecting*., eds. Roger Cardinal and John Elsner, (1994).

[37] Pierre Bourdieu, 'Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception', *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

[38] Irving Velody, 'The Archive and the Human Sciences: Notes Towards a Theory of the Archive', *History of the Human Sciences*, XI, No. 4 (1998):1–16, 1.

plausibility, authenticity.'[39] As part of being human there is a misplaced hope that if we could somehow collect and stow everything away (an impossible exercise), we could perhaps reach some kind of truth. Although archives provide ample material for research, they are created by a process of inclusion and exclusion and therefore incorporate bias. This is not to deny the archive's merit, but rather to remain cautious of 'the complete picture' provided by the archive, and to instead recognise its inherent fragmentariness.

In trying to evaluate how we catalogue the ephemeral, the challenge remains, as noted by Hughston, to 'put our hands on everything'[40] simply to give us something to look back on. Ideally, we would keep everything, much like artist Andy Warhol did with his *Time Capsules* (1973 – 1987), of which the artist said: 'I just drop everything into the same-size cardboard boxes that have a colour patch on the side for the month of the year'[41] – as if by storing everything we could reclaim an entirety, a whole context, at any point in the future simply by opening the box. And the *Time Capsules* (1973 – 1987) have indeed become interesting for unforeseeable reasons. They now provide ample research material both for those studying the artist as well as the period. However, because of the constraints surrounding temporary artworks, we cannot simply keep everything. Furthermore, as illustrated, the archive is not a blank slate. It is comprised of a selection and thus in its very nature offers an edited sample, which means that the archive has its limits. It is restricted, not only in its classification and ordering of contents, but foremost in the initial prioritising through choice.[42] This incompleteness is echoed by historian Carolyn Steedman who emphasises the process of arbitrary selection and most importantly, exclusion:

> The Archive is made from the selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past *and* from the mad fragmentations that no one intended to preserve and that just ended up there. . . . In the Archive, you cannot be shocked at its exclusions, its emptinesses, at what is *not* catalogued.[43]

The fragments serve as a means to reference what is no longer present, a loss. They become a way to contextualise and grasp the meaning of the temporary thing that no longer is – loosely, it is a means of conservation alongside a necessary transformation.

When trying to consider ways of representing immaterial histories, an archive serves as a means of both acknowledging events and making them accessible and

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[39] Helen Freshwater, 'The Allure of the Archive,' *Poetics Today*, Volume 24, Number 4, (Winter 2003).

[40] Milan Hughston, 'Preserving the Ephemeral: New access to artist' files, vertical files and scrapbooks', *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Winter 1990): 179-181, 181.

[41] Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to Ba and Back Again)* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975).

[42] Matthew Reason, 'Archive or Memory? The Detritus of Live Performance', *New Theatre* Quarterly, Vol. 19, Issue 73, (2003): 82-89, 84.

[43] Carolyn Steedman, 'The Space of Memory', *History of the Human Sciences*, XI, No. 4 (1998): 65–83, 67.

knowable for current and future audiences. Accordingly, an archive serves as a way to present what is in the past and otherwise no longer accessible, and enables us to integrate history alongside the present – which invariably changes how we understand the contents of the archive.

In trying to revisit a temporary artwork that no longer exists, it is the memories of the work which linger and through which a lost work is found, both for the primary viewer who was able to experience the work first-hand, and for the secondary viewer. This is to say that a lost temporary artwork cannot be made present in any traditional fashion. Rather, its absence can be made apparent, and connections to the work can be presented in lieu of the lost material object.

To a certain extent, the living archive echoes the practice of oral dissemination, where the act of telling and retelling becomes a form of passing on and preserving the lost artwork. Like performance itself, a focus is placed on the live as 'a knowledge-producing encounter.'[44] In a retrospective of lost temporary artworks, members of the living archive – the so-called unintentional archivists – could be present to recount the works and their experiences. The performance that lies in retelling the experience thus becomes a means of reliving elements of the past and bringing them forward into the future – keeping the lost work alive. Art historian Michael Holly, whose research is sympathetic to O'Neill, describes the dialogue that the living have with the past as 'the magnetism that perpetually binds subjects and objects.'[45] This is significant because it builds a framework for understanding the dynamic between viewers and artworks and the inevitability of experience and storytelling. Holly clarifies the experience of loss for what has been and cannot be recaptured. Memory-making, and subsequent mourning, is part of the human condition, and retelling experiences becomes a way for memories and experiences to be continued, thus keeping the work alive and carrying it forward into the future.

While arguing for the validity of using and documenting oral history, oral historian Alistair Thomson describes the development of a Renaissance of memory as a historical source, in which he further posits that ignoring the memories around specific experiences becomes a way of silencing them and editing them out of history.[46] When the contemporary conservator's focus has shifted to include a more inclusive holistic approach which considers the whole context of artworks, and the experience lies at the fore of

[44] Caroline Rye, 'Incorporating Practice: A multi-viewpoint approach to performance documentation', *Journal of Media Practice* 3:2 (2003).

[45] Michael Ann Holly "Mourning and Method", *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 84, no. 4 (Dec., 2002): 660-669, 660.

[46] Alistair Thomson, 'Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History', *The Oral History Review*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Winter - Spring, 2007): 49-70, 51.

temporary artworks, it follows that considering these experiences, and finding ways to apply the living archive become a way of carrying the work forward.

Finding ways to put memory on display is intrinsically linked to the construction and analysis of oral history, which helps develop public understanding of collective myth-making and experience. Rather than be stifled by the lack of an object, museums could capitalise on oral history as a means of mapping the absence of the artwork while still connecting to it. From here on in, bodies in charge of the living archive can creatively apply multimedia technology, e.g. sound and video, in order to display the living archive and assist audience interaction.

If the living archive is pursued as theoretical tool, it is interesting to consider how it might be applied in real life – to explore how far we might take this thought experiment and use it. It could take the form of Fiona Templeton's curated event: *Bodies of Memory* (2012) for Tate Britain, in which performers, artists, writers, curators, or as she collectively described them: 'people who witnessed something being done' were invited to inhabit the museum and collectively recollect past performances, with the idea of them 'rising and disappearing like memory itself.'[47] To a certain extent, as becomes apparent in the Tate's showcasing of *Bodies of Memory* (2012), the act of remembering can become a particular way of restaging lost artworks. Similarly, the living archive could be applied to lost temporary artworks as a means of touching upon artworks that are being remembered, events no longer able to perform on their own behalf, through disseminating memory multiples, to be understood as a series of memories of the same work. Notably a memory multiple, unlike a traditional art multiple, is not an identical series. Rather, multiple is used here to clarify the same reference point, namely the same artwork, which is inevitably remembered differently.

The living archive, which can be understood as a collection of intangible documents, can be used a tool to present the lost artwork. As the archive is initially intangible, it remains a conceptual tool until it can be made tangible. Part of the value of the living archive as a conceptual tool is that its elusive quality mimics that of temporary artworks. However, in mimicking the fleeting and intangible qualities of temporary artworks, it also repeats the same problems of long-term accessibility. This raises questions as to how we might access and store the memories that form this living archive – how do we use it? Pragmatically, conservators and curators might want to record and possibly digitise the living archive or part of it. However, in trying to collect and store the living archive into an actual physical archive, new challenges arise, such as how the experiences

[47] Part of a larger programme at Tate Britain called 'Acts of Legacy'.

and memories stored can be used and applied, and what conservation issues come with storing oral history.[48] Transforming the living archive into a material archive is first and foremost an exercise in collaboration.[49] The unintentional archivists hold stock in the living archive. Those who wish to disseminate what is held in the living archive can do so through applying the toolset of the contemporary oral historian, namely the training, understanding of ethics, and means to collect and store the stories in question. The repercussions of this transformation are of course the flattening of memory. In capturing and freezing memory, you strip it of its liveness. This may not always be desirable for the artist or indeed other stakeholders. A discussion around this must take place if the living archive is indeed considered as a method. As a theoretical tool first considered in this thesis, it is still in its infancy.

5.3.3 Memory fallibility

The task of using memory to conserve temporary artworks is difficult, because there is an inevitable tension formed by a viewer's subjective relationship with the artwork in question and how they have experienced the work, as well as from the fallible and transient nature of memory itself. There is of course the inevitability of compromise that comes from trying to create something which is 'enduringly ephemeral' and in deciding what it is that will be passed on and how it might be done. There is no single cohesive memory of an artwork between art audience members. Moreover, as memory is prone to change, there is arguably no cohesive memory of an artwork for an individual art audience member over time either. This line of thinking is in accordance with art historian Matthew Reason, who posits that through rejecting the traditionally understood authority of archives, we can 'look beyond the surface authenticity' and instead memory can be understood as providing variations of experiences. In application to temporary artworks this means that we can present memories which refer to experiences of 'the real thing' without falsely contextualising them as the artwork.

Parallel to a temporary artwork which undergoes a physical loss, the unintentional archivist will inevitably deal with degrees of memory loss and simple forgetting. In order to counter the intrinsic changes which shape memories, they would have to be recorded. This necessitates that we think twice about how we understand and use memory as a tool to continue to interact with and understand temporary artworks after they have ceased to

[48] Ellen D. Swain, 'Oral History in the Archives: Its Documentary Role in the Twenty-First Century', *The American Archivist*, Vol. 66, No. 1 (Spring - Summer, 2003): 139-158, 155.
[49] Ibid., 150.

physically exist.

Trying to extend the temporary is in its purest sense a losing battle and although memory-based identity exists and persists, invariably parts of it change and get lost. Memory is fallible – in some ways it has a career akin to temporary artworks, including change, and obsolescence. Whether this matters depends on what outcome is desired. The vulnerability which is posed by the changeability of memories can also be seen as a potential asset. In application to the temporary, the ephemerality of memory echoes the temporary artwork's transience. It is the flaw of our own mortality which helps the work continue to make sense after it is gone, as it echoes the 'original' artwork's finiteness. This is because memory depends on a living vessel, an audience, to carry it forward, unless it is otherwise imbued in documentation. Our own physical restrictions and flaws, as presented through the ephemerality of memory, mimic the artwork with a faithfulness that upholds the work's integrity. The transmutability of memory is parallel to the ephemerality of the temporary artwork, recognising both change, and loss.

The living archive, which is built up of the sum of memories from encountering the artwork, becomes a pool of experiences which acknowledge the lost artwork and can be used to present an artwork which has physically disappeared to future audiences. Practically, as a conservation and later exhibition strategy, this means finding ways of sharing these memories. The long-term use of these memories involves recording them and transforming them from intangible documents to a more tangible and less changeable medium. There is a difficulty in presenting documentation of memory, as one potentially distorts the other. When we solidify memory through documenting it, this distorts it, by paring it down and rendering it two-dimensional. The consequence is that the fallibility of memory, which mimics the temporariness of the works discussed, is mitigated, as the living archive assists in creating more permanent documents.

5.4 Documentation as a tool

As discussed in Chapter 4, documentation has become commonplace within contemporary conservation practice. The conservator documents the artwork in the state that it arrives, as it changes (if it is intended to), in parallel with documenting conversations with the artist (where possible), and any decision-making process. There are different ways of documenting, both written and visual, and there are different sorts of documents, the nature of which is often impacted by which stakeholder has made the document and for what purpose. Documentation in the field of art conservation is broadly understood as 'the process of gathering and organising information about a work; including its condition, its

content, its context and the actions taken to preserve.'[50] It can furthermore be distinguished by its different purposes e.g. for publicity and presentation, reconstruction and conservation, for recording changes, developing a framework of reference, educational purposes, capturing experience, or for capturing the artist's process.[51] The full context of the work is documented as far as possible. This produces a lot of information surrounding the artwork, but does not necessarily produce the artwork in a form which is presentable to the public or which enlivens the work after it is gone.[52] The purpose of a document fundamentally shapes its use. The document itself can be many things; however, as it is addressed here, documentation is specifically created for the purpose of mapping and enlivening the artwork after it is gone. When correctly contextualized, documentation can be understood as an alternative non-invasive means of conservation. This extended conception of documentation is necessary in order to lead to better understanding of the work at hand, for both present, and critically, future audiences.[53]

Artists working in a temporary framework often create additional more enduring objects which reference the ephemeral event and serve as well as historical documentation. Artist-made documents can therefore often be divided into cataloguing and archival devices, as well as saleable objects. For example, Dutch artist Berndnaut Smilde (b. 1978) creates man-made clouds which he stages in empty spaces, alongside which he captures these ghostly works in photographs, selling the images which reference the creative moments which have evaporated. In this manner, the artist, as referenced by practicing artist and art historian Holly Crawford, is paradoxically allowed 'to have their traditional art objects to sell and exhibit, while at the same time have their ephemeral aesthetic cake by very publicly positioning their art as temporary.'[54] The document of the ephemeral moment, the truly temporary artwork, becomes an artwork unto itself which can be collected and conserved via more traditional means. As such, in these instances the artist is complicit in making the ephemeral enduring. These contradictory modes of conduct enable the artists to pragmatically ensure their presence in the art market.

Other artists may consciously abstain from creating documents as art objects, as is

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[50] Annet Dekker, 'Methodologies of Multimedial Documentation and Archiving', *Preserving and Exhibiting Media Art: Challenges and Perspectives*, ed. Julia Noordgraaf (Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 150.

[51] Ibid., 151.

[52] The process of enlivening, or keeping the artwork alive is arguably one of the conservator's goals.

[53] Ibid., 169; Future audiences are discussed, as in historicising a work, and carrying its legacy forward in some manner, one presumes there will be future audiences.

[54] Holly Crawford, 'Having Their Cake and Eating It Too: The Case of Christo's (and Jeanne-Claude's) Im(permanence) and Exclusivity', *Artistic Bedfellows: Histories, Theories and Conversations in Collaborative Art Practices*, ed., Holly Crawford (Landham Maryfield: University Press of America, 2008), 257.

notable in the work *Break Down* (2001) by artist British Michael Landy (1963). This work served as an exercise in dispossession, in which the artist created a work through cathartically shedding his personal possessions by literally shredding them. The artist consciously did not produce any stable saleable by-product as it would interfere with the statement of the overall work. There had been an initial plan to sell some of the granulated remains; however, this idea was quickly aborted as the artist deemed it contrary to the work's theme of dispossession, loss, and anti-consumerism.[55] And yet, the artist did agree and collaborate in documenting the work in book form.[56] Consciously, as dictated by the artist, beyond documentation and memories, nothing remains of this work.[57] The book, a form of documentation, alongside memories, provides a means of (re)visiting the work which the artist feels does not completely compromise the disappearing nature and statement made by the work.

Documents, other than providing ways of possessing, in part also serve as a way to commemorate and retrace, and when applied to temporary artworks they can also be considered critical traces to help us revisit and understand what we have lost. For the work which is no longer there, such as Kara Walker's antebellum sugar boys which have melted, Anya Gallaccio's works which have melted or otherwise rotted, or Hannah Bertram's 'drawings' which have been swept up, a document, such as a photograph, provides us with proof of something that once was, an indication of what the work physically looked like, and a way to remember, retrace and discuss the work well into the future, alongside memory.

The relationship between memory and documentation is symbiotic, in that memories are in many ways intangible documents which can be turned into stable physical documents, and documents inevitably serve as tools for memory. Cultural historian Marius Kwint posits that in Western traditions, objects serve memory in three main ways: they furnish collections as they constitute our picture of the past; they stimulate remembering; and they form records as analogues to living memory.[58]

Documentation is different depending on who documents, (the artist, or the conservator), and for what purpose (to produce a saleable object, to record, or to create reference material to continue to enliven). Current uses of documentation in conservation

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[55] Julien Stallabras, 'An Artist After Break Down' [Michael Landy, *Nourishment*, Interim Art], *Evening Standard*, 17 (December, 2002).

[56] Michael Landy and Julian Stallabrass, *Michael Landy: Break Down* (London: Artangel, 1999).

[57] Mundy, 243.

[58] Marius Kwint, 'Introduction', *Material Memories – Design and* Evocation, ed., Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward, Jeremy Aynsley (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 2.

theory serve as ways of recording the artwork, but not necessarily enlivening it. A conservator needs to work with the artist in question in order to understand where the liveness of their artwork is situated. If an artwork is indeed performative, as with temporary artworks, ideally any documents used to present the artwork to future audiences would contain some of this performative aspect, and find a way to communicate the experience of loss. Here it is postulated that documentation might become more than just information, and can instead be used as a means of animating the temporary artwork after it is gone. If correctly contextualised as a fragment of something which no longer exists, and clarifying the absence of the artwork, some documents might be understood to be performing the original artwork to which they relate. In doing so, these documents do not become the original material artwork that they reference, or new artworks, but rather rouse the lost artwork, through communicating its crux, which could perhaps even be seen as its aura.

5.4.1 The document mapping the material missing

Documentation remains a means of recording temporary artworks, and when applied and contextualised provides a viable means of continuing *elements of* an artwork, thereby enabling prolonged durational engagement. This is in accordance with art historian Ulrich Lang, who proposes that 'if an artwork decays materially we have to find ways to recall it in other forms'.[59] In recalling temporary artworks through documentation, this situates the temporary qualities of a temporary artwork at the beginning of its career, namely in its original physical embodiment, which is transient. Documentation is an obvious solution here, which is why conservation efforts have dutifully incorporated recording artworks into their protocols.

If we think of documents in application to temporary art practice in the widest sense, these documents can also be understood as art ephemera, which can be used as described by librarian Jacqueline Cooke, to have a 'cartographical effect'.[60] In application to temporary artworks, this means that documents could serve to map temporary artworks that are no physically present through communicating the intentions of the artist as well as recording the work. If we cannot provide future audiences with the physical thing, then instead we might be able to offer them a map in the form of a collection of documents and memories which give access to a work that no longer is – like a map to a place that no

[59] Ulrich Lang, 'The Passing Away of Art', *Tate Papers* Issue 8 (October 2007), 6.

[60] Jacqueline Cooke, 'Heterotopia: art ephemera, libraries and alternative space', *Art Documentation*, 25(2), (2006): 37-40, 34.

longer exists. Extending temporary artworks could thus involve learning to map the artwork for these future generations – collecting both the experience of the work through memory, as well as the physical object through records that touch upon the work, in such a way that the work is not just static data, but in fact re-performed. This would involve beginning to think about documents as mapping negative space – the aforementioned void left by the work that no longer is – presenting the audience with information that echoes the absence of the physical object. A document of a temporary artwork would, as performance theorist Peggy Phelan suggests for other types of performance works, serve as a spur to memory.[61]

The documents left behind after the temporary artwork is gone, alongside the memory of the artwork, would become part of a quest to understand what we have lost by offering glimpses of the outlined artwork. As already discussed, although initially seen as contradictory to the ephemeral nature of the work, the documents would, as described by art historian Alex Potts, problematically be: 'testifying to their relative inadequacy, to their provisional and contingent nature.'[62] However, much like memory, the document's fragmentary nature, that is to say that its inability to encompass the full artwork, could be seen, as suggested here, as a strength. This failing could be understood as a successful way of signalling the artwork's material absence and the loss of a temporary artwork – proof of loss as echoed and performed by the document. The inability of the document to adequately represent a temporary artwork in its fullness can serve as its strength, as when correctly contextualised, it emphasises the loss of the artwork, instead of standing in for it. Cultural theorist Jean-Paul Martinon goes so far as to assert that:

> … the ephemeral event only exists through the embodiment of the process of becoming. The remains of an ephemeral event (photographs, articles), by contrast, constitute the transcendental aspect of the object that once presented itself as pure becoming.[63]

The documents help us come closer to the truth and experience in part through their inability to cope with the full scale and context of the artwork in question. The document, as a fragment of a work, thus further fragments the work in such a way that amplifies the incomplete state of the artwork: echoing the absence of the artwork and thereby honouring the transience which is so critical for temporary works.

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[61] Peggy Phelan, 'The Ontology of Performance', *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993).

[62] Alex Potts, 'The Enduringly Ephemeral', *Tate Papers* (Autumn 2007), 1.

[63] Jean-Paul Martinon, 'The Ephemeral Event in Modern and Contemporary Art – Words from Ashes' (PhD diss., The University of Reading, 2001).

Part of the strength of documents is to see them within a larger context, or as artist and art historian Tracey Piper-Wright describes it, to understand the document as a point of departure.[64] If we take the document at face value as a final conclusive object, its value is limited. However, if we see it as a trace, something more open and part of a larger absent construct, the lost artwork, the document becomes a starting point with infinite new possibilities. Instead of presenting closure, it has the possibility to open the artwork to new readings, understandings and experiences. Art historian Julien Stallabrass, who discusses documentation as a form of after-life for temporal and ephemeral artworks, states the following:

> The results [the documents] serve as aids to memory for those who were present, but what purpose do these often opaque documents fulfil for those who were not? Perhaps they act as fixed and insistent tokens of the works' resistance to reproducibility, the documents' very impoverishment being an assertion of the unique and authentic qualities of the work.[65]

The document, as Stallabrass notes, does not function in the same manner as the work to which it relates. Rather, what a document can disclose of a work pales in comparison to what the artwork itself offers the primary audience. As outlined by art curator and researcher Annet Dekker 'like any other form of representation, documentation will always be arbitrary and incomplete in relation to the artwork'.[66] Dekker points to the critical limitations of documents, but, much like Stallabrass, risks being dismissive of the potential of the document by noting that the document does not function in the same manner as the actual artwork. Critically, a document must be seen as separate from the artwork to which it relates, and therefore cannot justly be criticised for not performing in the same way. A document, as proposed here, should rather be seen as a perspective and a fragment. In the absence of the artwork, documents, much like memory, are ways of speaking about and for the work through asserting the unique and authentic qualities of the lost material work. The material presence of the original artwork does matter. The material object is a catalyst for the primary viewer's experience and creates a physical reference point which is lost through a performance and language of inevitable loss. It is this tension of inevitable loss which posits itself in experience and memory and is traced in the document. Documentation can therefore be used to map absence and loss.

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[64] Tracy Piper-Wright, 'Life after Death: The relevance of digital technologies for entry into the 'canon' of temporary, ephemeral and non-gallery sited art works', paper for the CHArt Conference 'Technology and 'the death of Art History' (10th-11th November 2010).

[65] Julien Stallabrass, 'Memories of Art Unseen', *Locus Solus: Site, Identity, Technology in Contemporary Art*, ed., Julian Stallabrass et. al. (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2000), 26.

[66] Dekker, 149.

Memory and the document together reference a loss that has already taken place – the absence of the material temporary artwork – thereby continuing to echo the work that is gone. They perform the loss that has already taken place, and, although they cannot replace the lost work, instead manage to continue to speak of the loss that has taken place, carrying some of this experience forward.

5.5 Reconfiguring the roles of memory and documentation in conservation

As approached within this research, memory and documentation can be applied to promote a holistic means of conserving the temporary artwork, recognising the importance of the whole as well as the interdependence of its parts. This approach acknowledges the impossibility of traditional conservation methods of trying to preserve material, and instead accepts the need for a temporary artwork to physically play itself out.

If the art object must be destroyed for its completion, the focus in preserving the work should not lie in trying to physically retrieve it, as with traditional conservation efforts. Rather, focus should be moved to exploring how to sustain the work through alternative means which contextualise the piece and make it known and accessible for future audiences.

A temporary artwork's identity lies in part in its short shelf-life as a physical object. Not only the material selection, but also significantly, the manipulation of the material, and the artist's intentional choice to enact the material unmaking of the work as part of the work, contribute to the reading and aesthetics of the work. The works are time-based, but furthermore not only constructed to be executed within a certain time, but also framed through their material disintegration – the fact that they cease to physically be. The variable character of the temporary artwork is one of loss; the work cannot be sustained or owned in any traditional sense as it is claimed by its own inevitable demise, and can only be remembered.

To find a way to perpetuate a temporary work is to make a commitment to an artwork as a whole, and to see its career as reaching beyond its original material state. The different stages of the artwork's career can be understood as what Pip Laurenson discusses as 'the artwork's continued existence.'[67] The concept of the artwork's career is interesting as it presumes the artwork's variability over time and leaves open the idea of the work's finality. If applied to temporary artworks, a case could be made for the artwork's career as

[67] Ibid., 4.

continuing even after the material work is unmade. The memory and documents of an artwork might be considered to be a further stage of an artwork's career; this has implications for how we might begin to think of alternative conservation strategies. It is through the memories and what is left behind that we are able to hold onto the work, to see what has played out and acknowledge the loss while simultaneously constructing new experiences for new audiences.

For temporary artworks it is crucial that we appreciate the different states of an artwork's career, as the distinct changes may all be part of the artist's intent for the work in question, and integral to understanding and, critically, trying to maintain, the work's so-called 'authenticity', which can be understood as hinging on the ontological framework in which the artwork is conceived, as is discussed by Laurenson.[68] In order to ask how the conservator preserves the temporary artwork's authenticity, we must consider where the work's authenticity lies, and consider what it is that we mean with the conflated term 'authenticity'. Contemporary conservation theory applies the notion of multiple states of authenticity, as supported by Muñoz-Viñas.[69] This multiplicity suggests that the term authenticity can be applied to different aspects of the artwork as is echoed by art historian Rebecca Gordon's research,[70] and that the definition and connotations it has are in fact, as described by art historian David Lowenthal in 'continual flux'.[71] When applied to the ever-changing temporary artwork, the work's career includes the different material states of the artwork, from its material beginning to its material unmaking, and what might come after. A temporary artwork can be said to be 'authentic' in all these states.

As has been established, all artworks change, but this is most pronounced with temporary artworks which are here and then gone; accordingly, the transitions between the various stages of the work's career are particularly pronounced. Recognising these different states as part of the artwork's authenticity and considering the whole scope of the work's career suggest that we might begin to consider a more inclusive repertoire of documentation around the work's different stages in order to make the breadth of the artwork evident for current and future audiences and researchers.

Conservation efforts exist in tandem with artworks' needs. As these needs shift it

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[68] Laurenson 2006, 4.

[69] Salvador Muñoz-Viñas, 'Beyond Authenticity', *Art Conservation and Authenticities: Material, Concept, Context: proceedings of the international conference held at the University of Glasgow, 12-14 September 2007*, ed., Erma Hermens and Tina Fiske (London: Archetype Publications, 2009), 8.

[70] Rebecca Gordon, 'Rethinking Material Significance and Authenticity in Contemporary Art' (PhD diss., University of Glasgow, 2011), 13.

[71] David Lowenthal, 'Changing Criteria of Authenticity', *Proceedings of the Nara Conference on Authenticity in Relation to the World Heritage Convention*, ed., K. E. Larsen, (Norway: Riksantikvaren 1995): 121-135, 123.

becomes clear that conservation theory must change alongside. Conservation theory itself, as has been discussed, is developing. In order to meet the needs of more ephemeral works, such as temporary artworks, conservation theory continues to adapt, allowing for a more open interpretation of what it means to preserve a work and how to carry its legacy forward. Instead of looking to preserve the work as a whole, given the nature of temporary artworks, fragments which acknowledge the absence of the 'original' material artwork can be seen as a means of continuing the experience of the artwork, as they continue to keep the artwork alive, and its critical theme of loss at the forefront of its experience. These practices can be seen as conservation strategies in that they find a means to continue to make durational engagement with an artwork possible, whilst not harming the integrity of the artwork in question, provided the artist agrees to this.

5.5.1 Continuing to manage the perpetuity of loss

The experience of a temporary artwork is in part shaped by the impending fracture created by the knowledge of the inevitable loss of the work. The temporary artwork is completed through its impending absence, and the viewer must consolidate this simultaneous being and not being as part of his/her experience. There is a foreboding knowing of what is to come, in the ephemeral moment triggered by bearing witness to the work and its inevitable disappearance. In these instances the artist establishes a connection and a response from the viewer to the work through the work's various evident career stages, including the impending material unmaking. The essence of the work lies in this unmaking, and after the material work is gone, the knowledge of this unmaking comes to lie with the viewer.

When material loss serves as the conduit of reading and ultimately experiencing an artwork, as is the case for temporary artworks, those trying to sustain the work in question are challenged with finding a way to draw out this essential property of the work. Documents and memory together become a means to continue to carry the work forward after it has physically ceased to be. Their presentation as conservation tools, however, needs to clarify their role to the artwork as a whole. They function as art historian John Berger describes them, as single iterations in which 'the static betrays the absence of life'.[72] The static makes evident what is lacking: time and movement, in short, life. They are fragments, which further fragment the work. In doing so, they help sustain the absence of the artwork, by making it evident that the artwork is indeed not present, and thereby continuing to echo the theme of loss as part of the experience of the artwork. In postulating that documentation and memory might come to stand in for the lost artwork and carry

[72] John Berger, *Berger on Drawing* (Aghabullogue, Cork; Occasional Press, 2007).

some element of it forward, there is no illusion of high fidelity. Rather, the static nature of documentation and the haziness of memory make evident that what is captured is a fragment.

Although a lost artwork may have physically ended, its interaction with the space it once inhabited can become available through memory and documentation, like an audio recording of talk that is no longer live, but can still be played for non-primary audiences. This forms the next stage in a temporary artwork's career. Together, memory and documentation become ways of managing the perpetuity of loss as they provide fragmentary performances of the artwork. This conceptualization is part of the original contribution of this thesis.

Conserving the work not just to remember it, but to understand and come closer to the work. Hence if the crux of temporary artworks lies in their performance of loss, it is this performance of loss which we must find a means of continuing. Memory in its imperfection, and documentation in its fragmentary state can together contextualize and be used to clarify the lost material artwork and the temporary artwork's performance of loss.

5.6 Conclusion

It is difficult to imagine futures for artworks that are built without obvious longevity and which in fact negate a traditional material long-term existence. A temporary artwork does not rely solely in its material formation; it also relies on a transitional material actualisation. To further complicate matters, temporary artworks, though rooted in the wake of conceptual art, are irreproducible.

Negotiating a possible future thus involves locating a lost material work through a discussion of how it is understood by the artist, and by other stakeholders including the conservator, collector, and curator. It is also critical to locate how the work is experienced by primary art audiences, and what it would mean to experience an artwork, without its original material form, by non-primary audiences. The latter is a necessary consideration for those interested in extending the lives of temporary artworks.

To conserve, collect and display works which vanish involves understanding the needs of the work at hand. Each artwork will have specific requirements and constraints. However, different temporary artworks share similar characteristics, and a similar framework of temporality, and can therefore be categorised together under the umbrella term: temporary artwork, as is developed and done throughout this thesis. The significance of setting these different works out, while still grouping them under one term, is to clarify the difficulties, needs, and power of these works, so that we can come to terms with ways

in which we can envision a future for them, so that we might continue to discuss and experience them long after they have physically ceased to exist.

Material unmaking, as discussed in this thesis, can be seen as a vehicle for loss – both of the physical work, and as a means to engage with broader themes that deal with loss as a concept. However, the theme of loss should not necessarily be simplified and understood as mournful. Considering the temporary artworks discussed throughout this thesis, we see that in the case of Hannah Bertram, the artist employs material loss, alongside material selection, to discuss notions of becoming and disappearing, and the cyclical tendencies of life and work; whereas Kara Walker employs material loss and material selection to engage with a political and historical past. The inevitability of material change and dissolving are critical not only in literally shaping, but also in reading these different works. They discuss the theme of loss, but together make clear the range of engagements possible within it.

In understanding the composite role of temporality within the framework of temporary artworks, it becomes evident that these works cannot physically last; however, various artists, such as those reviewed, indicate that their works can still be discussed and retraced through memory and in some cases documentation. Memory and documentation can be used as tools to continue to present aspects of a temporary artwork in such a way as to enliven it through enabling future audiences to experience the work, while clarifying and contextualising that they are fragments relating to the work.

An exhibition or a museum without artworks would not be an empty room, but rather a space of experience made possible through the lingering remnants of temporary artworks which have played themselves out, so to speak. It is proposed that, while framed as conservation tools, memory and documents could additionally be used to serve as maps to lost artworks. They can be used to discuss and experience elements of the artwork, extending the artwork and keeping it alive while clarifying that the artwork is absent. It is this framing of absence which capture a key part of the original contribution of this research.

Although a lost physical artwork can never be replaced due to the confines in which a temporary artwork functions, fragments of the work can continue to portray the loss of the material work and its process of material unmaking, continuing the work's legacy through enabling a continued durational engagement. This continuation, which stages the artwork, and manages to perform the loss which is so critical for its reading, could be considered an alternative means of conservation for temporary artworks and a successful possibility for stewarding temporary artworks into the future. Good care for temporary artworks becomes a practice of contextualizing absence and using memory and

documentation to consciously experience and look for what is missing.

What initially seems like a paradoxical task is in fact not completely oxymoronic. To preserve the temporary, while also acknowledging the framework which allows the work to makes sense, is not only a matter of compromise, but also of recognising certain elements a temporary artwork needs to undergo for its completion – it is to allow for a work's material obsolescence. It is finding a way to experience an artwork, while also letting part of it go. Through using memory and documentation as a means to represent the performance of loss, conservation theory and practice grow to accommodate the needs of temporary artworks, while still enabling future audiences with a durational means of engaging with these works.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: The Future of Temporary Artworks

6.1 Introduction

Artist Anya Gallaccio has been a driving source of inspiration within this research, as many of her canonical early works are exemplary temporary artworks, which capture the difficulty of trying to locate a temporary artwork, both during its installation and after its material unmaking. As such, coming full circle, I will return to the case study which opens this thesis, Gallaccio's temporary artwork *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996) in order to outline the findings of my research. To recapitulate, *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996) was a temporary artwork commissioned by the Women's Playhouse Trust. It was a site-specific work situated in the disused boiler room of the Wapping Pumping Station in London, for a total period of three months, from February to April 1996. The work's material consisted of 32 tons of ice blocks stacked to form a cube of 2 x 3 x 4m, within which lay hidden a half ton boulder of rock salt, stimulating the process of melting of the overall structure. The conclusion will unfold as follows: *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996) will be discussed in relation to the core themes. After which, recommendations for further research and for the field of conservation will be provided. Finally, the research project as a whole will be summarized, and I will provide thoughts on where to place the future of temporary artworks, and the significant roles of loss and absence in this future.

Figure 6-1 Anya Gallaccio, *Intensities and Surfaces*, 1996, ice, rock salt, 118 x 157.5 x 157.5 inches, 34 tons, installation view, Boiler Room, Wapping Pumping Station, London. Image courtesy of the artist and Blum & Poe, Los Angeles/New York/Tokyo.

Figure 6-2 Anya Gallaccio, Intensities and Surfaces, 1996, ice, rock salt, 118 x 157 1/2 x 157 1/2 inches, 34 tons, installation view, Boiler Room, Wapping Pumping Station, London. Image courtesy of the artist and Blum & Poe, Los Angeles/New York/Tokyo.

6.2 Revisiting core themes

In the Introduction, which is the first chapter of this thesis, temporary artworks are defined, and it is clarified why this term is used. The three most critical elements which shape temporary artworks are set out, namely that they are physical works, they are present for an intentionally limited time, and they exist only once. We see all three qualities clearly illustrated through *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996), which is presented to the art audience as a physical structure of ice, with a core of rock salt hidden within, speeding up the process of melting. The structure as a whole is meant to melt – and it is through the choice of materials and their conjoined structure that the physical work is unmade. Like swansongs, Gallaccio's temporary artworks, such as *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996), readily proclaim their own ending. Gallacio has discussed the idea of longing and loss, which is so poignant in many of her pieces, as making things with 'the idea of an object that you can't possess, something that's quite intangible'.[1] Certainly, as is the case with *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996), 'loss is more'[2].

Furthermore, *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996) was a site-specific temporary artwork situated outside a formal gallery and museum space, challenging the agency of formalized spaces in which art is normally viewed. Moreover, through its conscious employment of materials which would weather and emphasizing this process of destruction through its material construction, the work as a whole critiques the value of a stable art object, creating an immediacy. As such, as a transient object it is 'possessed from the inside' as Gallaccio discusses it.[3] These conscious critical acts of eradicating the art object, of performing a type of institutional critique, and of framing the audience relationship and responsibility to the artwork in question, are all themes rooted in art practise developed across the twentieth century, and are heavily indebted to the early *avant-garde*, as covered in the second chapter. A combination of changed ways of thinking about art and indeed different ways of making art which challenged concepts of the object of art, the art object, the role of the artist, the role of the at audience, and the space in which art was made, viewed, and experienced came to the fore and have remained significant, as we see illustrated in temporary artworks such as *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996).

Chapter 2, 'Tracing the History of Temporary Artworks', specifically provides a

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[1] Patricia Bickers, 'Meltdown: Anya Gallaccio interviewed by Patricia Bickers', *Art Monthly* No. 195, (1996): 3 – 8., 3.

[2] Jonathan Watkins ,ed., *Anya Gallaccio,* Orchid Press (Birmingham, UK, 2003), 11.

[3] Judith Rugg, 'Regeneration or Reparation: Death, Loss and Absence in Anya Gallacio's Intensities & Surfaces and Forest Floor', Locality, regeneration & divers[c]ities, Locality, regeneration & divers[c]ities / edited by Sarah Bennett, and John Butler, (ed.), (Bristol: Intellect, 2000).

historical timeline, clarifying the context from which temporary artworks have developed. It establishes the legacy of the early *avant-garde* movements of the twentieth century, and following movements which continued to develop questions around the object of art, art objects, and to focus on themes of immediacy and experience. Alongside tracing the themes which have contributed to the development of temporary artworks, the chapter also clarifies why temporary artworks are a category unto themselves, namely due to their specific constraints as well as the process of material unmaking, which signifies a return to the material object, rather than the earlier creative act of dematerialization. Temporary artworks such as *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996) are not simply conceptual artworks. Rather, how temporary artworks are experienced is shaped and driven by a material object *and* process of material unmaking and as such temporary artworks present a returned interest and re-evaluation of the role of art objects within artworks as a whole.

Chapter 3, 'Contemporary Conservation Contextualized', continues the discussion on the role of material in temporary artworks. Specifically, it develops a framework for recognising temporary artworks, which is increasingly complicated due to the ambiguity of materials used in artworks made from the twentieth century onwards. This framework can be understood as a toolkit of questions and considerations which clarify when artworks are indeed temporary artworks. For instance, when applied to *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996), this work can be understood as a temporary artwork as it is made out of fugitive or otherwise vulnerable materials, making the work as a whole temporary, according to the artist's intent. I also clarify that there is not only the artist's intent which plays a role, but that there are also the intentions of other stakeholders which impact the care and understanding of an artwork.

Contemporary conservation is changing according to the needs of modern and contemporary artworks, shifting from a focus on physical and visual preservation, to more inclusive ideas. Currently documentation is accepted and in use to try to contextualize and record artworks. This is useful; however, it is critical that documentation does not take the place of unmade temporary artworks and that it is not misconstrued as being the temporary artwork. Temporary artworks are transitory objects, straddling the line between object and non-object. The material object of a temporary artwork is – borrowing terminology from Roland Barthes, and building on the research of Rebecca Gordon – both structure and signifier, through the selection of material, construction, as well as the process of material unmaking.

Building on the importance of how material, and in particular material unmaking shape the audience's experience, I apply philosopher John Dewey's seminal work 'Art as experience' to temporary artworks in Chapter 4, 'Temporary Art as Experience'. I

illuminate that the whole of a temporary artwork is a process, which is enabled through the material object, but also extends beyond it. Sonja Alhauser's work *Exhibition Basics* (2001) is used to illustrate this point. The shift is focused onto how a temporary artwork is experienced by the viewer. The factors which impact the experience are broken down into what is described as first-hand (primary) versus second hand (non-primary) experience, which is explored through looking at Peter Drew's *Home* series (2012), placed outside on the streets of Glasgow, and Rune Guneriussen's work *A grid of physical entities* (2012), which has a highly limited primary audience, namely only the artist. The importance of the primary viewer is discussed, making evident that artworks which are not disseminated in any form are inevitably lost. What is passed on from a temporary artwork is contingent on the stakeholders, including the primary audience, who are posited as a group of unintentional archivists holding stock in a living archive. It must be noted that what is handed on is always incomplete, and also prone to change. Memory is fallible and documentation requires context.

The difference between first-hand and second-hand experience is also explored, and an argument which is key in imaging futures for temporary artworks is developed, namely that the primary audience who experience temporary artworks first-hand, experience presence. Whereas non-primary audiences who experience temporary artworks second-hand, experience absence. The significance of the mediated experience is made evident through discussion around Angela Bertram's temporary artworks, made in both the private and public sphere. The implications of audience scale are made evident through the different works discussed, which evidence that temporary artworks function within exclusive circumstances and that there are challenges and compromises which arise from trying to change these exclusive circumstances, such as audience, duration, and location.

Applying these concepts to *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996), it is evident that this temporary artwork is experienced in the public sphere, as it is situated in a venue open to the public, but encountered in this thesis through non-primary means, namely through description, discussion and photographs. Although there will have been several primary audience members who experienced the work first-hand, we, as non-primary audience members necessarily experience *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996) through mediation – seeing the work out of its context of space and duration, and relying on what the primary audience has transmuted. After one of Gallaccio's works has ended, generally nothing of the material work is kept as a possible artefact; it is wholly discarded. The lack of material, once the work is over, poses challenges to preserving and even archiving the work. The artist admits to archiving personal photographs of her work for promotional purposes, to show curators and bolster her work, and some of those photographs have been lent to this

research. Accordingly, in the public domain little remains of these bygone works save for documentation. The lack of material residue, combined with dependence on audience participation is inherent in the artist's practice. These are by the artist's assertion, part of the equation.[4] In these instances the artist establishes a connection and a response from the viewer to the work through the work's various evident career stages, including the impending material unmaking. The work lies in this unmaking, and after the material work is gone, the knowledge of this presence which shifts into absence comes to lie with the viewer.

The impact and value of this loss is further developed in Chapter 5, 'The Performance of Loss', where I establish the argument that temporary artworks function through a performance of loss, specifically of the material object which is physically unmade. This is evident in *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996), which melts until there is nothing left. There is a weight posed by this physical loss. Loss is the previously discussed void that fills the space of the work that once was, but no longer is. Material unmaking serves as a gesture which prefaces – foretells of impending silence. The inverse noise created by the eventual lost material forms a deafening silence to stand in for the physical work.

As *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996) is presented now, it exists as a series of photographs, and through the accounts and memories of those who visited its installation which form a type of 'living archive'. As memory and documentation are all that is left behind, and the work cannot be recreated, these are the tools left to work with to conserve the unmade work. Memory and documentation become ways to contextualize the lost physical object, and to clarify and sustain its absence. In a retrospective of Gallaccio's temporary works, it would not be possible to recreate *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996) due to the constraints surrounding temporary artworks, including singular material embodiment. However, it would be possible to stage the absence of *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996) by creating an exhibition which presented memories and documents of the work, and together explored the manifold experiences and perspectives of the work, thereby providing new audiences with a wide ranging and multiplicitous understandings of *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996), promoting a fuller understanding and new experiences of the lost work. As such, an exhibition without original material temporary artworks, is by necessity a retrospective which looks back at the material object and acknowledges the absence of the unmade artwork. It is a gesture to the absent artwork – a subtle reorientation of experience, shifting this experience from presence to absence, acknowledging what has

[4] Anya Gallaccio, 'Response to a Space', a-n (For Artists), (November 2000).

happened and what was there.

The experience of a temporary artwork is intrinsically associated with its material making and unmaking and this performance of loss. The physical object and its dynamic with the viewer draw their strength from the notion of what theorist Guy Debord discusses as 'the construction of situations'.[5] The audience, the work, and its time and context together make up an electrifying 'situation' in which the whole becomes a *Gesamtkunstwerk* of sorts which relies on the tension of finitude. What is witnessed is something which cannot last for the primary audience, or, for the non-primary audience, something which did not last. Trying to experience *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996) now, is to trace it by what is left behind. Documents and memory can be used together in order to clarify its material absence. They are not the same thing as the 32 ton ice and salt structure, and cannot replace or stand in for it, but they do allow us to approach and consider the material object which has been lost, and to contemplate its absence and what it was. Trying to (re)visit *Intensities and Surfaces* (1996) is to grab hold of the carnality of its absence.

6.3 Recommendations for further research

One of the limitations of this research includes the fact that the proposal of using memory and documentation in order to continue a temporary artwork's performance of loss and contextualize absence has not been put into practice. It would be useful to compile a series of practical guidelines, perhaps with a model, and additional insights from a conservator and other stakeholders, such as with the support of a research and collecting body, in order to clarify how to instigate the process of using memory and documentation to contextualize future material absence. These guidelines could be dispersed among researchers as well as conservators for implementation. The implementation of these guidelines could be studied in order to promote new insights and further refine the set guidelines.

Due to the interdisciplinary approach taken within this research, possible future research could include contributions from researchers from other fields. For instance, the idea of creating an exhibition without material artworks has the potential to be further explored, and this could be implemented through research as practice, involving artists and researchers. Moreover, further in-depth analysis of 'the living archive' could include trying to actively create and engage with such an archive in order to understand its usefulness in practice.

Further applications may arise from the ideas put forward in this thesis. Temporary

[5] Guy Debord, *Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action*, [1957], transl., Knabb, K., http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/report.html (accessed 12 November, 2012).

artworks are used as a lens through which contemporary conservation strategies are analysed. As such, other artworks could be approached with the questions set out in this research, thereby further opening up the dialogue of practices of good care within conservation and collecting practices in general.

6.4 Conclusion

In part this research project is an attempt to carve out an understanding of, and to reconcile with, an artistic practice which eradicates the space that it initially takes up, understanding the core themes of these works as well as how to interact with them on a very pragmatic level, and from this pragmatic level trying to understand what a future for temporary artworks could be without the material objects that critically give form in both their material making and unmaking.

The umbrella term 'temporary artworks' as applied here sets apart a series of works that are shaped by shared constraints: they are physical works of art which exist for an intentionally limited amount of time, and are created only once. These specific constraints problematize the engagement of future audiences due to the temporary artworks' very limited and singular existence as physical artworks. This research clarifies an overarching structure of questions and considerations which illuminate what sets temporary artworks apart, including a consideration of the artist's intent, material selection, material unmaking, the different stakeholders. Through this research, it also becomes clear where similarities with other works lie. Through these similarities it becomes clear that ideas around the durational engagement with temporary artworks can also feed a wider discussion of conservation, and benefit collecting and conserving bodies.

Reviewing the body of works discussed in this thesis has in part been an exercise of piecing together fragments of works no longer present, in order to present a vision of what they were. It has been a realisation that hindsight is in fact not 20/20 when one has only small pieces to work with. Trying to postulate how to present a temporary artwork's fullness without its physical object is an exercise in making considered compromises and exploring the boundaries which give shape to temporary artworks. What is proposed is that as we turn our attention to artworks that are not physically present, we see how their material absence structures how they are understood and experienced by future audiences. This is a consideration of what the loss and absence of a temporary artwork says about the work's presence and what the perception of an artwork is after it has ceased to physically exist. During its material lifetime, a temporary artwork promotes an experience of presence; after its material unmaking the work can only be experienced as absent. It is the

performance of loss which connects the two experiences; however, this performance is experienced differently at different points in a temporary artwork's life.

The thesis further sets out how experience is different for primary audiences and non-primary audiences, illustrating these differences in light of discussion of several temporary artworks by among others, Sonja Alhäuser, Peter Drew, Rune Guneriussen, and Hannah Bertram. It is made evident that there is an inevitable loss between the primary and non-primary audiences' relation with a temporary artwork and a need for compromise when envisioning a long-term durational engagement.

On the basis of the findings of this research, I have proposed how we might continue to engage with temporary artworks after they are gone, namely how to contextualize the material object that is lost through a process of material unmaking and experience a temporary artwork without its physical presence. Documentation can be used to map the missing material objects alongside the memories of the primary audience, the so-called unintentional archivist who hold stock in what I put forward as a living archive. A retrospective of temporary artworks is by necessity an exhibition without physical artworks. Instead, fragments in the form of memory and documentation would be presented alongside each other in order to promote new experiences. The focus is placed on sustaining the absence of lost temporary artworks through acknowledging the theme of loss and continuing to riff and reflect on this. It is this experience of the performance of loss which can be shared through memory and documentation for a prolonged, durational engagement after a temporary artwork has ceased to physically be. However this experience shifts from one of presence and impending loss to absence and what has been lost over the course of a temporary artwork's material unmaking. The future of temporary artworks lies in their intentional absence. Through contextualizing the material absence of unmade temporary artworks, it is possible to continue to engage with their performance of loss and experience part of the stake of the physically unmade temporary artwork. The artwork is not present, but its loss and absence is.

"I am an artist, and I have to have courage ... Do you know that I don't have any artworks that exist? They all go away when they're finished. Only the preparatory drawings, and collages are left, giving my works an almost legendary character. I think it takes much greater courage to create things to be gone than to create things that will remain."

- Christo

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