

This is an exhibition about a performance which has not happened yet. Not unlike a conventional display of performative works, it involves moving image, photographs, objects, scores and documentation as well as alternative means of keeping performances alive.

The exhibition reverse-engineers performance, starting, anachronically, from what the event will have generated. Here, the performance event has not occurred, and yet its “material” has already arrived. The exhibition thus experimentally questions the perceived linearity of time – a past followed by a present and a future – disrupting the ontology of causality and effect. Performance lingers in the intervals among these material forms, in the “future perfect” of potential scenarios, in the disruptive *a priori* of conservation.

Conservation is actively acting upon, rather than reacting to, an object in its care (*pro-action* as opposed to *re-action*). The inscription of conservation’s interventions, which commonly take place on a deteriorated work, is here prescriptive and creative. In such an arena, where “knots knot knots” and “thoughts think thoughts” (Donna Haraway), what answers are we finding to the questions that have not been posed yet?

The exhibition envisions experimental technologies of care. Just as inpainting is an aesthetic technology that employs one of a painting’s media, we propose to transpose certain mediatic aspects of performance into the modes of its capture and documentation. A LEGO model, Polaroid photography, chance poetry and AI are implemented as free-hand visual, sculptural and textual inscriptions of the event. A flipbook notates movement, being itself, and not entirely unlike film, a form of a moving image. Resembling a mix of camera obscura, archaic telescope and a theatre box, the tube peers into a deep vision of the event that will have taken place.

Trying to do more with less in these precarious times, the exhibition employs an economy of means by drawing on the surrounding environment. It finds, curates and performs existing things rather than creates them anew. Importantly, it proposes a radical rethinking of contemporary conservation, unlearning the habitual directionality of “securing the past for the future” and overcoming the tyranny of short-term thinking. This is a deep-time conservation that establishes long-term relations and listens to the multidirectional ongoingness of things in the extended present.

The archival part of the exhibition invites the viewer to browse through the rich archive of the SNSF research project “Performance: Conservation, Materiality, Knowledge”: interviews, conversations, a questionnaire, and its website.

This exhibition is a part of the research festival “Conserving Performance, Performing Conservation” organized by Hanna B. Hölling, Andrej Mirčev, Joanna Leśniewska, Charles Wrapner and Emilie Magnin within the research project “Performance: Conservation, Materiality, Knowledge” (SNSF 2020–2024).

Conceptual part

Video, Film: Film or video record the performance-event through the lens of a particular technology, subject to its creator's perspective. Over time, their status often shifts from document to artwork, "representing" the performance. This white noise film is a glitch in the transmission of the performance that will have been, pointing to the imperfections of time travel.

Polaroid Photography: The performances of the 1960s–70s were sometimes captured on Polaroid, which allowed for instantaneous viewing, evaluation and revision of the photographed scene. Unlike traditional photography based on a film negative that offers a possibility for reproduction, Polaroids are unique visual artifacts, harkening back to the prefilmic technology of daguerreotypes, and visually resounding the traces of a performance-event.

Object: Relic, Prop, Leftover: A performance-event often implements or generates objects, which are preserved after its conclusion. Props refer to any objects deliberately used in a performance, while leftovers are incidental objects left behind. Transcending this distinction, relics encompass objects which acquire special status, power, or agency after the event. Not all props and leftovers become relics, nor do all relics derive from performance.

Documentation: A form of performance preservation, documentation records performance: its bodies, spaces, times and objects. Showcased are several contemporary formats of documenting performance-based artworks, such as performance specification, activation and identity reports and the artist questionnaire. They still need to be filled in.

Script, Score, Notation: Visual art performance and dance employs a variety of notations and scores which serve as "aide-memoire" for subsequent re-enactments. These forms emerge either prior to or after the performance-event, with the intention to serve as a basis for future enactments. In their capacity for activation, scores are exemplary models of a performance yet to come.

Archival part

Mind map: A mind map presents knowledge in motion. Having no beginning and no certain end, it is a "learning machine" that visually organizes information into a diagram structured around a central idea. Opposing the slow linear-narrative method of traditional information media like books, films or lectures, this mind map writes both performance and conservation as ever evolving, networked paradigms in which creativity and scrutiny intersect.

Interviews: 2020–2024, our team conducted discussions with leading scholars, curators and artists working in the field of performance and conservation. By offering these excerpts, this compilation conveys some of the most important epistemic experiences generated and cumulated during the project's runtime.

Two Questions: In the interview series *Two Questions*, our research team asked two fundamental questions to a variety of experts who work with, in and on performance art and conservation: "Can performance be conserved?" and "What does it mean to conserve performance?" Edited following a dialectical method, this compilation of excerpts from *Two Questions* sheds light on the complex relationship between performance and expanded conservation.

Questionnaire: In advance of our third annual colloquium (May 16, 2023, at HKB and online), we gathered responses from artists engaged in performance, sharing their thoughts and feelings about conservation and the afterlives of performances.

Website: The project website serves as the ultimate archive and source of information for the Performance: Conservation, Materiality, Knowledge project. It features sections such as "Writings", "Events", and "Resources", among others, accumulated throughout the project's duration.

Books: The project resulted in two anthologies published by Routledge: "Performance: The Ethics and the Politics of Conservation and Care", Vol. 1 and 2. Published in 2023, the first volume is available as a hardcover and a freely downloadable e-pub. The second volume will be published in the fall of 2024.